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MELCOMBE LODGE;

OR,

Traits of Family Pride!

A NOVEL,

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY A LADY.

“ The nightingale may claim the topmost bough,
“ Whilst the poor grasshopper must chirp below :
“ Like him, unnetic’d, I, and such as I,
“ Spread little wings, and rather skip than fly.”



VOL. I.

LYNN :

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Melcombe Lodge.

CHAPTER I.

MR. De Clairville, by the death of his parents, had become at an early age the possessor of Melcombe Lodge, a noble mansion, situated on a fine estate in one of western counties of England. To this beautiful retreat he had, a few years after he became its master, introduced as his wife an amiable and accomplished woman,

the sister of his intimate friend, who, soon becoming equally attached with himself to the shades of Melcombe, could seldom be prevailed upon to quit them, even for the pleasures and gaieties of a London spring.

Mrs. De Clairville equally venerated and loved her husband, and his wishes were ever considered by her a law; in all his benevolent plans for the happiness and welfare of their poorer neighbours she warmly participated, and was with him equally adored by their dependants, who next to heaven ever considered this worthy pair as their best friends.

Edward, the eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. De Clairville, was the darling of his parents, and from his earliest infancy had given neither a moments uneasiness. To an understanding of the first order, he united a sweetness of temper seldom equalled. In personal attractions he was excelled by few.

as to the fine form of his father was added the superior beauty of his mother, who scarcely past the prime of life, was still a very lovely woman. His sisters were looking forward with delight to the next vacation, at the end of which, Edward was to take his degree and final leave of Cambridge. They congratulated themselves, that this beloved brother would have no further occasion to pore, so many hours in the day, over the enormous folios of greek and latin he had been accustomed to do in his occasional returns home: He would now have leisure to attend them in their walks, or rides; their sedentary pursuits he would also enliven: his books would make their working or painting hours pass swiftly, and in short in every employment or recreation, Edward was a prominent figure.

Matilda the eldest daughter, two years

her brother's senior, had been married some years, and was at this time the mother of a fine boy in his fourth year. Harriet two years younger than Edward, Ellen and Sophia twins, with a younger son still at school, were the other members of the De Clairville family.

Sir Charles Rushbrook, Mrs. De Clairville's elder brother, who resided generally on his estate in Hampshire, was a widower.

He had lost his wife in giving birth to a daughter; since her death he had vacated his seat in Parliament, and now seldom visited the Metropolis, finding his chief happiness in the society of his darling Emily, whose education he had carefully superintended.

Sir Charles had engaged for the governess of his daughter, an accomplished woman, who did not rest satisfied with giving

her pupil an outward polish, but sedulously cultivated her understanding, and instilled her own excellent principles into the mind of her young charge.

Mrs. Sedley was pious without enthusiasm, cheerful without levity, and learned without pedantry. In fine, she was all that could be wished for, as the preceptress of a young female, left like poor Emily, without a mother's eye to watch over her.

The younger brother of Mrs. De Clairville, a Post Captain in the Navy, had been so much engaged by his profession, that several years had elapsed since he had seen his sister or Sir Charles. But as it was then hoped peace would soon be happily established, it was his intention to visit them as soon as possible.

Captain Rushbrook was a bachelor in his fiftieth year, with health and spirits unimpaired, and with all that warmth of heart so generally met with in sailors.

His nephews and nieces, recollecting his good humoured indulgence of all their little whims when children, looked forward with pleasure to the time of his coming amongst them.

Sophia had been his greatest favourite ; for wild and frolicsome as a young fawn, she was never happier than when she could entice her uncle into a game of romps ; seldom, had she found much difficulty in doing this ; and he had often been heard to express a wish that she had been a boy, as in that case, he might have taken her to sea with him.

Ellen was a perfect contrast to her twin sister. Of a serious turn from childhood, she

seldom joined in her sports. She was passionately fond of music, and had not Mrs. De Clairville been firm with her, would have devoted her whole time to the harp or or piano. Her voice was naturally fine, and had been highly cultivated during the annual visits to London, which Mr. and Mrs. De Clairville made, solely for the benefit of their daughters.

Sophia was fond of music; but she had not the application of her sister, and consequently made less proficiency in the science; but in the use of her pencil, Harriet and herself surpassed Ellen; and great part of their mornings was dedicated to perfecting themselves in that delightful art.

CHAP. II.



As the family were assembled one morning at breakfast, the old butler entered and delivered a letter to his master. Mr. De Clairville glancing his eyes over the direction, said, "From Sir Charles I perceive."

"From my uncle!" cried Harriet, "I hope then to hear he has fixed the time for visiting Melcombe; do pray Papa, allow us to be made acquainted with the contents of his letter."

"Not before Tuesday fortnight ! she ex-

claimed, on finding that was the day named by Sir Charles for commencing his journey. Oh! I had hoped Emily would have been with us in time, to have accompanied us to the Warburtons. Charlotte, yesterday in her note to Sophia, said she had persuaded her father to give a ball whilst we were at Ashmore; and as they expected their house to be filled next week, she trusted we should be very gay the whole time of our visit."

"I think then my love," said Mr. De Clairville, addressing his wife, "we had better hint that to Emily."

"May not I write to my uncle?" enquired Harriet, "I think I can find arguments sufficient to convince him he is in duty bound to allow nothing to prevent his setting off from Woodley, next monday at farthest."

"One would suppose," said Ellen smil-

ing," it was Sophia who pleads thus earnestly, were they to witness the interest Harriet takes in a ball."

"You, I am aware, my dear Ellen," laughingly returned her sister, "feel not the least interested on the occasion."

Ellen colouring highly, was silent.

"And pray my dear Ellen," enquired Sophia, "is there any very great harm in liking balls?"

"No indeed," returned her sister, "and to convince you, my dear Sophia, I have no serious objections to them, I will dance the whole evening at the one we expect at Ashmore."

"Too great a love of dissipation will not be encouraged in you, my dear girls," said their father, "by either your mother

or myself. An immoderate love of pleasure, is highly to be deprecated, as it enervates the mind, and renders it unfit for any thing beyond the amusement of the hour. Duties, which if neglected we shall be accountable for hereafter, are forgotten, or thought upon with indifference by those, whose whole attention is devoted to a life of pleasure. You have heard Matilda's account of the family she visited last year, whose only happiness consisted in planning schemes of future gratification ; still hoping the next day's amusement would answer better than the present, in which they were engaged. To kill time, those seekers of diversion will play blind-man's buff, hunt the slipper, and in short, any thing to prevent *ennui*, their almost constant companion, from hunting them.

We are far from averse to innocent recreations for young people, and you are aware my dear children, your mother and

myself have encouraged them, rather than otherwise; and whilst you continue to partake of them with the moderation you have hitherto done, they will be of benefit in relaxing your minds from more serious avocations, and by giving you a greater zest in returning to them again. But Harriet, my love “continued Mr. De Clairville.” you wished to write to your uncle. Your mother tells me she intends calling at Delamere Abbey this morning; one of your sisters will of course accompany her.”

Ellen requested to be Mrs. De Clairville’s companion; and Sophia readily accepting her father’s invitation to ride with him, Harriet was left at liberty to compose her letter of convincing arguments to her uncle,

* * * * *

Mrs. De Clairville and her daughter were received with great politeness and

apparent cordiality, by the ladies at the Abbey. Mr. Fitzarthur had never been able to prevail on his wife to accompany him to this his favourite seat, since the first year of their marriage. His visits to it had been therefore very short ; scarcely extending to a week : and he was now indebted to a nobleman, whom Mrs. Fitzarthur had determined one of her daughters should captivate, for inducing her to leave London at this time. She had heard Lord Deresford was going to spend the Christmas at his seat within a few miles of the Abbey ; and the wary matron immediately proposed to her husband passing the holidays in the west of England.

The Miss Fitzarthurs were showy young women, who had been accustomed to move, in what is called the first circle of the Town.

Ellen was desirous of appearing to the best advantage before her. Their draw-

ings were exhibited for her admiration ; the newest publications put into her hands, and the most fashionable music offered as a loan, which was gratefully accepted.

Mrs. Fitzarthur desired them to let Miss De Clairville hear their harp, and called on her youngest daughter for an admired Italian air. Ellen was pleased with the ready assent the young lady sang ; and and resolved to make an effort to conquer her own reluctance, the next time hers made a similar request in company.

When Miss Louisa Fitzarthur had concluded her song, Ellen thanked her in the most animated manner for the gratification she had received ; and soon after Mrs. De Clairville was rising to end her visit, when aloud ringing at the hall bell made the Miss Fitzarthurs fly to a window, wondering, as they had not heard a carriage, who it possibly could be.

Before their present visitors could make their parting congees, Lord Deresford was announced. Mrs. Fitzarthur was in extasies at seeing him, and forgetting at the moment, Mrs. De Clairville and Ellen were in the room, was giving her undivided attention to his Lordship, when the entrance of Mr. Fitzarthur, who immediately addressed the ladies, recalled them to her recollection, and perceiving Mrs De Clairville about to depart, she smilingly enquired if she were going so soon, and entreated she would allow Mr. Fitzarthur to order the carriage from the door.

Mrs. De Clairville excused herself, as it was already later than she had been aware of. "Indeed," she continued with a smile, "I fear I have now exceeded all bounds in the length of my visit, which must be my apology to Mr. Fitzarthur for running away the moment he appears.

Then taking leave of her fashionable hostess, she was with her daughter conducted to her carriage by Mr. Fitzarthur, who expressed his concern at having been from home when Mr. De Clairville had done him the honor of calling upon him, and that he had not arrived sooner this morning; but as he intended immediately to return Mr. De Clairville's visit, he hoped to be more fortunate at Melcombe.

Mrs. De Clairville, after assuring him they should all be happy to see him there, was assisted by him into the Barouche, and Ellen quickly following they drove from the door.

Ellen, on reaching home, amused her father and sister not a little, by relating how entirely her mother and herself had been forgotten, after Lord Deresford entered.

“What sort of a man is his lordship,

my dear Ellen ?” enquired Sophia. “Is he as handsome as Matilda’s husband ?” “He certainly has much the appearance of a gentleman” returned her sister; “but I must leave you to decide whether he is handsome or the contrary, as I really saw too little of him to hazard my opinion.”

“I heard from his steward that Lord Deresford was arrived,” said Mr. De Clairville; “and am under some apprehension he is looking about to see what timber he can level.”

“Surely” cried Harriet, “he does not intend cutting down those beautiful old oaks which are such an ornament to his park. It would be sacrilege ! How often have we admired them, and endeavoured to conjecture how many years they had stood there.”

“That majestic tree,” said Sophia, “that

rears its head so high and-spreads its arms so wide, in the middle of the park, has always brought to my recollection what Cowper describes his Yardly Oak once to have been,

“King of the woods, whose spreading boughs
“Oe’r hung the Champain, and the numerous flock
“That graz’d it, stood beneath that ample scope
“Uncrouded, yet safe sheltered from the storm.”

“Suppose Sophia,” said Harriet laughing, “we unite in a petition to his lordship, to spare *that* tree, at least.”

“An admirable thought,” returned her sister; “and we will get the Warburtons to sign it also.”

“Do so;” continued Mrs. De Clairville in the same sportive tone, “and I will be the bearer of it, when I pay my respects at the Priory.”

CHAP III.



About six miles from Melcombe, resided a family with whom the De Clairvilles were in the habits of intimacy. Mr. Warburton had been many years a partner in a large Banking house ; but within the last four, having withdrawn his name from the Firm, and substituted his son's in its place, he had resided entirely at Ashmore, which was the name of the beautiful seat he had purchased.

His family consisted of a wife and four children. The eldest son, the young banker, had an establishment of his own in Town. Charles, the second son, was intended for the church, and generally resid-

ed with his family. Between this young man and Edward De Clairville, an intimacy had been formed, which promised to ripen into a firm friendship. Young Warburton had not the advantages of person his friend possessed; but what his features lost in beauty was amply made up in expression. He was two years Edward's senior at Cambridge, and the latter was at this time, ardently hoping to obtain the same high honor his friend had reached before him.

Eliza Warburton was rather pretty, and had she been less affected would have been a very agreeable girl. Unfortunately, her parents had suffered her to be brought up by her Grandmother, by whom she was almost idolized; and when the old lady died and Eliza returned home, her mother with grief saw it was too late to eradicate a failing which had grown up with her, and was now become a second nature. She sung

tolerably, and was on the whole as accomplished as any fashionable mother of the present day would require a daughter to be.

Eliza had persuaded her father to purchase a pedal harp for her; fully convinced her figure would appear to as great an advantage, as the fine form of Ellen at her favorite instrument; upon which she made no doubt she should soon rival, if not excel her. This, Charles would not have allowed possible, as in his eyes, Ellen could be excelled by no one.

Charlotte, the second daughter, was Charles's favourite sister; she was some years younger than himself, and he had taken the greatest pleasure in assisting to cultivate her naturally fine understanding. She was all life and spirits; and at times required a gentle hand to check the wild exuberance of the latter. The expected visit of her friends from Melcombe, gave

her the greatest delight; and her light heart danced when she looked forward to the time which was now drawing near.

Charles would have been better pleased had the De Clairville family alone been their guests. Charlotte on the contrary was rejoicing she should be able to make their visit so pleasant, which a large party in the house at that season of the year, seemed to promise.

Eliza intending and fully expecting to appear to advantage in the eyes of all. was from morning to night, practising attitudes for her harp.

Her mother now giving up every hope of seeing her lose the ridiculous affectation she so much lamented, left her to herself, whilst she deeply regretted her error in having been persuaded to relinquish her child during those years she most wanted a mother's eye.

CHAP. IV.



It was now the middle of January; the weather had been remarkably mild for the season ; but a frost had just set in, which promised to continue some time.

On the morning of the day Sir Charles and his daughter were expected at Melcombe, Harriet and Sophia tempted by a bright sun, sallied out escorted by their younger brother, now at home for the holidays. They were scarcely without the park when a gentleman attended by his servant, passed them on horseback.

Sophia after expressing her wonder who it could be, said, "He is certainly very handsome, and as our country cannot boast of the beauty of the male sex, he must be a stranger here."

"Possibly," returned Harriet laughing, "like another Apollo, he has dropped from the clouds."

"Wherever he came from," remarked George, "whether from the heavens or the antipodes, he is the finest fellow I have seen for some time: and I do not think Harriet, even Alfred Howard can excel him in that point."

"I am no judge," said his sister blushing; "but I observed the gentleman you are both so much struck with, appeared no less so with you, and I almost fancied he knew us."

“At any rate” returned her brother, “he will, when he meets us again. But who he is, we are not likely long to be ignorant as he entered through the Lodge gate into the park. I have a great inclination,” he continued, “to run after him, and enquire his name, as I should like to know who the handsome chap is: and then, Sophia, I can also inform him, you have tumbled in love with him.”

“No no,” returned Sophia, laughing; “I beg you will do no such thing. It is a delightful morning for a walk, and we must keep you to direct our course: where shall we bend our steps?”

“If you will be guided by me,” he replied, forgetting the stranger in the gratification he felt at being thought of so much consequence, “I will take you a nice round, if you do not dislike stiles,”

“We are, I think, too much accustomed to them,” said Sophia smiling, “to make them any objection to the walk you intend taking us, my dear George: so, quick march.”

“My reason for the enquiry,” he rejoined, “was the fear you should meet with the same accident in crossing them, I saw two young ladies not long since do, with whom I was walking a few mornings before I left Eaton. They, I verily believe, will henceforward have as great an antipathy to the sight of one, as Charlotte Warburton has to a turkey cock.”

His sisters requesting to learn the nature of the accident, he told them that his friend Chambers and himself, knowing the Miss Charleburgs dresses never consisted of more than one breadth and a half, determined to take them a road where they would have at least half a score stiles to cross.

“That was not like you, my dear brother, to distress females so,” said Harriet.

“I meant it all for their good,” he answered laughing.

“And did they escape any fracture?”

“No, indeed. The elder sister, in making the first attempt to mount one, tore her gown from the bottom to the top. I then told her, if she would make her dresses a little wider, she might at any time cross a stile without fear. But we are now approaching one ; if you are under any apprehension of the same accident happening to you, I would not advise your attempting this.”

“Fortunately we have no fears of that kind to prevent us, said Sophia laughing, as she lightly jumped over it. “But where are you taking us? Much farther than you were aware of, I suspect.”

“Do not be alarmed,” he cried; “you will be in time I promise you, to arrange your dress before dinner, even should that fine fellow make one at table.”

But George had certainly miscalculated, as on consulting their watches, they found they must walk very fast, to be back by the dinner hour.

On arriving at the Lodge, the sisters were hurrying to their apartments when they were met by Ellen, who was then leaving her own: but anxious to know what had detained them so long, she returned to it again with Sophia, when observing her almost exhausted with walking so much beyond her usual pace, she desired her not to attempt conversing till she had a little more recovered her breath, and offered, as Margaret was engaged with Harriet, to supply her place at her toilet. This being soon completed, Ellen acquainted her sister with

the information she had received from Margaret, that a gentleman had arrived on horseback, attended by a servant, and was still in the house ; but the girl had made such a strange name of it, she could not learn who it really was, except that he was a Lord somebody.

Sophia conjectured it was the handsome stranger they had met on the outside of the park; but she had not time to inform Ellen of the circumstance, as they were at that moment joined by their elder sister, and finding it very late, they hastened down. In the hall they were met by George, who merely detaining them to enquire how they felt themselves after their run, opened the door of the drawing room for them, when the first object that met their view, was the fine form of the stranger, reflected in a large pier glass opposite, conversing with Mr. and Mrs. de Clairville at the upper end of the apartment.

“The Apollo, by heaven!” whispered George to Sophia, “But don’t blush so much, or he will really believe that in verity and truth you have fallen in love at first sight.”

Mr. de Clairville introduced his guest to his family, as Lord d’Arcy, the intimate friend of their brother Howard.

George, after expressing the pleasure this introduction gave him, regretted his not having known his Lordship, when he passed them in the morning: and Lord d’Arcy acknowledged the idea had occurred to him the next moment, that his sisters and himself were certainly members of the De Clairville family. “But,” he continued, “as I was debating whether or not I should introduce myself to you, the opportunity was lost, by your being already out of sight.”

Dinner was announced, and as they were

seating themselves at table, Mrs De Clairville enquired of her daughters, what had detained them so much beyond their usual hour.

George took upon himself to apologize for his sisters ; saying, he had taken them a longer round, than they were aware of. "But as I have their forgiveness," he continued, "I hope you will not withhold yours, my dear mother: especially as you perceive they do not look the worse for their run: for run we did ; aye, and fast too, or we should certainly have lost our dinner."

"I am happy I was not of your party to day, if this was the case," said Ellen ; "as to have been in time, you must either have carried, or left me behind you."

"The latter we certainly would not have done," returned her brother, "yet I confess I am not sorry you did not accompany us

But my dear Ellen, may I enquire how you employed the time of our absence ?”

“In doing little or nothing,” she replied: “as I merely attempted to copy a drawing of Harriet’s.”

“Waste not your time in copying, I beseech you,” he rejoined ; “If you want subject for an original picture, allow me to recommend one to you. What think you of Apollo falling from heaven ?” and as he spoke he looked archly towards Sophia.

“How came you to fix on that subject ?” enquired Ellen.

Sophia will solve the question to your satisfaction” he returned.

But Sophia colouring highly, assured her sister, she was as much in the dark as herself.

"I suspect there was more in that speech than met the ear," said Lord d'Arcy, smiling to George; for he had remarked the arch glance the latter had directed towards Sophia. Sophia, fearing he had observed her confusion, and had partly guessed what had occasioned it, now said, "The first has, I fancy, acted like a bracer on George's spirits; as he has been wilder to day than I have seen him for some time."

"In part you are right, my dear Sophia" he returned. I am not sorry to find it has set in; and hope it will continue with us at least a month."

"You are fond of skaiting, I presume?" said Lord d'Arcy, smiling at his earnestness.

"I love it better than any other amusement," he replied.

"You forgot shooting, George," said his father.

“And fishing,” said Harriet.

“And riding, walking, and dancing you may add,” said Mr. De Clairville smiling: “for as they each return in season, George professes to like each best.”

“If skating is the ruling passion at present,” said Lord d’Arcy, “allow me to send you a pair of skais I have with me, made on an entirely new plan. I am myself extremely partial to the exercise, and whilst I am at the Priory, shall hope for many opportunities to try our skill in it.”

“You have an excellent piece of ice there;” observed George after thanking his Lordship. “I skated on it last winter, and thought I never was on better.”

“If you will accompany me on my return thither,” said d’Arcy, “we will have a trial of it to morrow. I can ensure you a cordial welcome from my cousins.”

George, looking much delighted at this invitation, thanked him with great animation; and his father, happy he should acquire such a friend as his present guest, readily gave his sanction to the plan.

Lord d'Arcy was prevailed upon to continue at Melcombe till the next morning; and George delighted with his new acquaintance, told his sisters when he joined them in the drawing room, he thought him quite equal to his brother Howard.

Upon the removal of the tea-equipage, Lord d'Arcy seeing a harp in the room, requested to be allowed the indulgence of hearing it. Mrs. De Clairville smiling, enquired of Ellen if she could summon sufficient courage to oblige his Lordship.

Ellen remembered Miss Louisa Fitzarthur; and wishing in this instance, to imitate her conduct, instantly complied, and

delighted her auditors by playing some beautiful welsh airs, with exquisite taste and feeling.

"I never saw you behave so well, my dear Ellen," said Sophia smiling affectionately upon her. "You really are a very good girl, and did not wait even to be entreated twice. I hope now you have gained courage to sing these welsh airs, you will give his Lordship a little Italian. Do sing my favorite song."

"Will you not first sing a duett with me?"

"Do you not also wish me, my dear Ellen, to take your seat at the harp?"

"And why should you not, Sophia?" enquired George, "I heard you practising it, this morning."

"That you might probably do: but I

suppose you would not ask a gentleman to exhibit in company, who has just begun to scrape the violin, merely because you heard him practising. If you did, I am sure it could only be for the wicked pleasure of laughing at him."

"But I suspect," said Lord d'Arcy smiling,, "your brother is fully aware there would be no danger of that, were you to favor us with a song on this sweet instrument."

"Seriously, my Lord," she returned, "I am a most wretched performer on the harp; and was literally practising when this young gentleman overheard me."

"But will you not allow us to judge of your proficiency."

"Indeed, "I must beg you to excuse me; as I am extremely unwilling both your

Lordship's politeness and my nerves should be put to the torture, which must infallibly prove the case, were I to exhibit on the harp. It is a most delightful instrument in the hands of a good performer: but I have myself been so much annoyed by a bad one, that I can feel for others."

"It is indeed a most delightful instrument said his Lordship, "when played in tune; but there are certainly some young ladies who sit down to it, without sufficient ear to inform them whether it is so or not."

"I recollect when I was a child," said Sophia, "I so much disliked the ceremony of tuning the harp, that when Ellen's master has been thus engaged, I have often wished he was made on the same plan which Milton so beautifully describes in his Paradise Lost, and which I had heard my father frequently repeat. George; I saw the volume, in your hands this morning before

breakfast, can you remember the lines I allude to?"

"I am afraid I should spoil them," were I to attempt repeating them, he returned; "but here is the book;" and turning to the page, he read aloud

"Their golden Harps they took,
"Harps ever tun'd. that glittering by their side
"Like quivers hung, and with preamble sweet,
"Of charming symphony, they introduce
"Their sacred song, and waken rapture high;
"No voice exempt, no voice but well could join
"Melodious part: such concord is in heaven."

"What can exceed this discription of a heavenly concert," said Ellen, "How delightful to believe there are no discordant voices to be heard there!"

"Now Ellen will moralize for an hour upon this subject, if we allow her," said George: "but as we do not any of us, I

hope, she will not think of joining, at present, the celestial choir, we will my dear sister, if you please, return to mother earth again."

"George!" cried Mr. De Clairville in a tone of voice his son but seldom heard; "I do not like to hear you speak thus lightly on sacred subjects."

Lord d'Arcy, wishing to give a turn to the conversation, now said, "my sister is very fond of the harp, and I think excels upon it almost as much as Miss Ellen De Clairville. I earnestly wish it might be resigned to them, and——"

"Leave the piano," returned Sophia, "to the wooden ears of the rest of our sex. Is not that what your Lordship was going to observe?"

"Remember," said Lord d'Arcy, smiling

at the archness of her manner. "I have not yet had the pleasure of hearing you play"

"No my Lord; and after the critique I have heard you pass on the generality of Lady-harp-players, I do not intent you ever should. But come Ellen, now let us have your song,"

Ellen complied ; and astonished Lord d'Arcy with the compass of her highly cultivated voice. He now requested he might be gratified by hearing the sisters sing a duett: but Sophia again excused herself, and in so playful a manner, that his Lordship completely fascinated, forgot to urge his request.

Late in the evening, Sir Charles Rushbrook and his daughter arrived: great was the joy expressed by the cousins at the meeting; and Harriet thanked her uncle again and again, for so kindly complying with her request.

Lord d'Arcy was known to Sir Charles and Emily, who appeared happy to meet him at Melcombe; and hearing he was come to pass some weeks in the neighbourhood, the former enquired how the Earl could spare him so long.

“At present,” replied his Lordship smiling, “my father is so much engaged in ministerial business, he could not, had I been with him, have devoted many minutes in the day to me; and my mother, glad to seize so good an opportunity as my leave of absence afforded, sent my sister under my escort, to the Deresfords.”

“Is Lady Grace at the Priory?” enquired Harriet. “I am sure when my mother knows it, she will make a point of calling upon her.”

Lord d'Arcy replied his sister would be much gratified by receiving such a mark of

attention from Mrs. De Clairville. She is so much unaccustomed," he added, "to be from my mother a day that her spirits, not naturally high, are now almost depressed. In Mrs. De Clairville she will find a resemblance to her beloved parent, and in her society and that of this amiable family, will feel less the loss of her own."

Harriet assured him, he might rely upon her mother, doing every thing in her power to make his sister feel as little as possible her separation from Lady Montreuil.

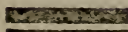
Mrs. De Clairville at that instant returning to the room which she had quitted to give some necessary directions, now learning the subject they were conversing upon, said she hoped Lady Grace might be persuaded to visit Melcombe for a short time.

Lord d'Arcy expressed his sense of Mrs. De Clairville's attention in the most ani-

mating terms: assuring her of the gratification it would afford him, to see his sister in habits of intimacy with a family he had already learned to admire and esteem.

So greatly pleased were all, with this young nobleman, that had not Emily appeared fatigued, no one would have thought of separating till a very late hour; but Mrs. De Clairville perceiving it, was the first to break up the party, and accompanied by her niece and daughters, retired for the night.

CHAP. V.



The Earl of Montreuil, the father of Lord d'Arcy, had passed several years on the Continent in an official character: arrogant by nature, the exalted station he was then placed in, as the representative of his sovereign did not tend to lessen it. He looked down with the greatest contempt upon all who could not trace their families as far back as the Conquest; and wishing to impress his son with the same illiberal prejudices, it would have been scarcely possible for lord d'Arcy to have escaped imbibing them, had not his mother endeavoured as

much as possible to remedy the evil before it was too late. To her was he indebted for the liberality of sentiment he now possessed. Lady Montreuil gently touched upon the errors of her husband, whilst all his good qualities she pointed out, as an example for her son to imitate. Lord d'Arcy almost adored his mother; her gentleness had won his earliest affections; and in all his little grievances, he had always found in her, his best adviser and friend.

His sister Lady Grace, held the second place in his heart: she was four years his junior; lovely in person, whilst in disposition she resembled Lady Montreuil, to know, and to love her, were synonymous terms. She had been in delicate health from her infancy; and her tender parent imagining she looked ill, and apprehensive the winter blasts might injure her darling child, had, as lord d'Arcy said, taken advantage of his leave of absence, to send

her under his care to the West of England.

Lord Deresford was the son of Lady Montreuil's brother; and the Miss Deresfords had often solicited their cousin's company: but hitherto without success: Lady Grace would not hear of quitting her mother, nor had Lady Montreuil now consented to part with her, but for the benefit of her health. The Earl could not at this juncture leave town, and the Countess was fully aware she must not, even to attend her child. But stifling every selfish feeling, she sent her darling Grace from her; perfectly satisfied she had a kind friend and protector in her brother.

Lord Montreuil was proud of his son: and anxious he should form a high connection, was continually proposing some lady to him, whose rank was equal or superior to his own. Lord d'Arcy parried the sub-

ject as often as he was able, but when he found he must come to the point, would assure his father he might rely upon his never marrying to disgrace his family, but begged till he had seen the female he could resign his liberty to, the subject might be dropped, as he felt it would be impossible for him to marry one, for whom he did not feel that preference it was necessary he should experience for the woman who would be his companion for life. The Earl would promise to rest satisfied with this assurance; but in a few days, again renew the subject to his son's great annoyance; and Lord d'Arcy felt happy at the thought of escaping for some time at least this continual persecution.

CHAP. VI.



George, anxious to be off early, rose with the light, but the rest of the party, not feeling his impatience, quietly reposed till their usual hour, to the great annoyance of the skaiter; whom Lord De Arcy found in the breakfast parlour, ready to attend him to the Priory. His lordship did not share in his young friend's eagerness to leave Melcombe, as what he had seen of the family had not disappointed the expectations he had formed. Ellen's gentle serious manner reminded him of his sister: their tastes

too appeared similar. Both excelled in music, and in person they were not unlike, as the transparent complexion of Ellen, could only be rivalled by lady Grace's. It was almost too beautiful; as the hue upon their cheeks, whilst it gratified the beholder, alarmed them also for the delicacy of constitution it seemed to indicate.

With Harriet, lord De Arcy was much pleased; but in Sophia's manner there was so much gaiety, accompanied with such a bewitching sweetness, that in his lordship's opinion, she was the most fascinating female he had ever beheld.

Thus impressed in favour of the younger part of the De Clairville family, and already feeling inclined to reverence and admire the elder, it is not extraordinary, lord d'Arcy was unwilling to quit their society. But he recollected his cousin expected him back to dinner, as a large party were in-

vited to meet him, and that he could not with any grace absent himself.

'To George's great delight, his sisters soon made their appearance, when Sophia aware of his eagerness to be gone, began making the coffee. Lord De Arcy taking a seat near her, said with a smile, "And am I really to depart, without having heard you sing?"

"If you are so very anxious to hear my wood-notes wild," she laughingly returned, "I certainly will indulge you : and it was only my fear of offending the critical ear of so great an amateur, that prevented my complying with your request last night. But I promise to sing to you an hour, or more, when we next have the pleasure of seeing you ; "if," she archly added "you have patience to wait till then.

Lord d'Arcy after thanking her, said,

“perhaps you will be reminded of this promise sooner than you are aware of; as I am happy to find we shall meet next week at Mr. Warburton’s.”

“Are you indeed to be there?” cried Sophia, a blush of pleasure illuminating her fine countenance.

Upon receiving an answer in the affirmative, she continued, “but you must not, indeed you must not my Lord, remind me of my promise at Ashmore. It is at home alone you must hear me sing; as it is only before my family and friends I ever venture to raise a note. But let not this disturb you; you will have enough of sweet sounds there.”

“And [more than enough, I can answer for it,” said George, “if Eliza Warburton is in one of her obliging fits. In that case you will be inclined to pray you may never

again hear the sound of a harp or piano, till you hear Sophia's favorite golden ones. "I make a point," he continued, "of running off, the moment I see this accomplished young lady preparing to take a seat at either of the above-mentioned instruments, and would advise you my Lord, to follow my example."

Lord De Arcy appeared so much amused with George's account of what he must prepare himself for, and laughed so heartily, that it encouraged the youth to give him a description of the young lady who had, in some measure, been the cause of his mirth, in defiance of the remonstrances of his sisters; till Mr. and Mrs. De Clairville, entering the room accompanied by Sir Charles Rushbrook, checked his volubility.

* Emily, feeling fatigued from her journey, sent her apologies for not joining the party

at breakfast; and soon after the meal was concluded, Lord d'Arcy made his parting compliments, and accompanied by George, returned to the Priory. Sir Charles and his brother-in-law retired to the Library, and the young Ladies repaired to their cousin's apartment, whom they had the satisfaction to find much recruited by a long sleep.

Harriet proposed their taking possession of the drawing-room, as it was the warmest part of the house, and the others assenting, they soon established themselves there, intending to pass a comfortable morning, engaged with their respective occupations.

Harriet was copying a miniature of her mother which had been taken some years since, and was considered an excellent likeness. Emily who had been some time watching the progress of the work, at length said, "There is a great resemblance in that picture to Edward: do you not think so?"

“It certainly never struck me before,” returned Harriet; “I now begin to fancy I can see it too.”

“It is not fancy,” resumed Emily: “look at the mouth, and then tell me, if you do not perceive an expression in it, that reminds you of your brother when he is particularly pleased with any thing?”

“Upon my word, Emily,” said Sophia laughing, “you appear to have studied this subject deeply;” then holding out her hand for the picture, she continued, “allow me to trace this great resemblance.—Well, you are right: there is a something about this beautiful mouth that reminds me also of Edward. How delighted he will be at your having been the first to discover it. I would not have him remain ignorant of what will confer so much pleasure upon him, and shall most assuredly write by to-morrow’s post.”

"Surely, Sophia," said Emily blushing, "there is no occasion for your writing, merely on this account, as Harriet tells me, Edward will be at Melcombe in ten days or a fortnight, at furthest: and I think that will be time enough for him to be informed of this wonderful discovery."

"Ah, Emily, you are very sly!" said Sophia: "you imagine, if you can persuade me to wait his return, the subject will escape my memory; but can you think I shall ever see him looking particularly pleased, without its returning to my mind?"

Harriet, perceiving Emily much confused by Sophia's raillery, to relieve her from it, enquired how long she had been acquainted with Lady Grace Montreuil, and added, "you never mentioned her to me in any of your letters."

"I thought I had" she replied; "it was

when we were visiting last autumn, at the Marquis of Longueville's: Lord Montreuil and his family, were in the country at the time, and passed three days with us there."

"You liked Lady Grace."

"Exceedingly. We spent two mornings together; and I found her mind had been sedulously cultivated."

"Is she as handsome as her brother?" enquired Ellen.

"I should not," said Emily smiling, "have expected this question from you, Ellen."

"And why not?" she returned. "Do you think it so very wonderful I should be as quick-sighted in this respect, as yourself or Harriet?"

"Or Sophia, you may add," said Harriet laughing, "for I can answer for the admira-

tion she yesterday morning evinced for the "Apollo," as George calls Lord d'Arcy."

"Pardon my impertinence, dear Ellen," cried Emily, holding out her hand to her: "but indeed I thought you did not set any value on the beauty of the male sex, and scarcely ever observed it."

"Then I am sure my dear coz." returned Ellen with more animation than usual, "you could not judge of me by your own sentiments; as I suspect *you* are not so indifferent to masculine beauty. And now, if I may repeat my question, is Lady Grace Montreuil as handsome as her brother?"

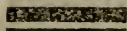
Emily blushing at this retort, replied "I scarcely know how to answer it. Lady Grace is very beautiful, but resembles her mother, whilst Lord d'Arcy is the improved likeness of his father."

“Pray Emily,” said Sophia, “is this Lord Montreuil so very proud?”

“I fear he is;” returned her cousin. “His manners are certainly highly polished, I might say refinedly so: but his countenance expresses an arrogance that renders it exceedingly disagreeable. Lady Montreuil is indeed all sweetness and gentleness: so desirous of pleasing her husband, and so devoted to his children, that though I was but a short time in her company, I felt I could love her very dearly. Lady Caroline Selbourne told me, the Earl was very desirous his son should marry, and from something that escaped her, I was led to suppose he would not be sorry to see him connected with the Longuiville family, but whether Lord d’Arcy entertains the same views, I cannot decide; though I must own I saw nothing to persuade me, Lord Montreuil’s wishes would ever be gratified.”

Sophia after a short pause said, she long-
ed exceedingly to be introduced to Lady
Grace, and trusted nothing would occur to
prevent her mother's intended visit to the
Priory the following morning.

CHAP. VII.



Nothing did prevent the intended visit, and the following day, Mrs. De Clairville with Emily and two of her daughters, drove to Lord Deresford's: As they entered the park, they caught sight of Lord d'Arcy and George, on the Lake. The latter was dashing along it, with the impetuosity belonging to his character; whilst the elegant figure of his companion, appeared in this graceful exercise to the utmost advantage, as they saw him passing between the trees.

The carriage now crossing the bridge,

was discovered by the skaiters, who kissing their hands in token of recognition, hastily threw off their skaits, and were in time to assist the Ladies in descending from it.

“I am afraid my Lord,” said Mrs. De Clairville, “we have taken you from your favorite amusement sooner than you wished. I think I must insist,” she added with a smile, “upon your returning to it again.”

“You will not I hope, my dear madam,” he replied, “be so cruel; as, were you indeed to issue such a command, I feel I must obey, however averse I might be to it.”

“What an excellent example his Lordship sets us, Sophia,” said Harriet laughing.

“I rather suspect,” she returned, “he is aware we are in want of it.”

Lord d'Arcy was going to answer in the same sportive tone, when the appearance of his cousin prevented him—Lord Deresford had before been introduced to Mrs. De Clairville, but her niece and daughter were strangers to him, and when the ceremony of introduction was over, he led the way to the saloon where his sisters and Lady Grace were sitting.

Lady Grace had anticipated with delight the moment of her introduction to the De Clairville family, in whose favour her brother had so strongly prejudiced her, that upon hearing their name announced by Lord Deresford, nothing but a sense of propriety prevented her from flying to meet them as they entered. She appeared happy to see Emily with them, and the latter was much pleased at again meeting her ladyship.

Sophia was anxious to become acquainted

with Lady Grace, and fortunately perceiving a seat next her, she had the gratification to find her ladyship very willing to second her efforts: for the latter, delighted with the gaiety of her new friend, soon found herself perfectly at ease; and they continued to converse together during the visit, totally forgetting this was their first interview.

The Miss Deresfords were pleasing, unaffected young women: fashionable in their appearance, but by no means handsome.

The conversation turning upon the expected ball at Ashmore, Lady Grace assured Sophia she should now anticipate the time with great pleasure, as she was to meet there, a family she had already learned to esteem and love.

Sophia found they were not a little indebted to the brother, for the favorable im-

pression the sister had received of them ; and did not feel less gratified by the discovery. Fascinated with the sweetness of Lady Grace, and in harmony with all around her, she had never appeared to more advantage than on this morning. Lord Deresford, drawn within the circle of her magic smiles, could attend to no one else. But Sophia thought not of him : it was Lady Grace alone whom she felt anxious to please ; and until she met the eyes of his Lordship riveted upon her, and observed their expression, it had not occurred to her that she was the object of attraction. Blushing deeply, she turned from him, and encountered the gaze of Lord d'Arcy, who earnestly regarded her. He was leaning over the back of Mrs. De Clairville's chair, at some distance from the sofa occupied by his sister and herself. He had observed the impression she had made upon the Viscount, and scarcely knowing why, felt angry at his evident admiration : he also perceived

by her crimsoned cheek she was unconscious of it. The next instant, he saw her speaking in a low voice to his sister, who immediately rising, approached him, and enquired if he were not well.

“Perfectly so:” he returned with a look of surprise, “why did you think I was not?”

“Miss De Clairville told me, she thought you were ill, as she observed you change colour.”

Lord d’Arcy gratified, Sophia should think of him at all, now approached and assured her what she had taken for indisposition, had merely arisen from languor, which the sudden change from the cold air to a warm room always occasioned him to feel.

Lord Deresford the next moment being called from the apartment, gave Lady Grace

an opportunity of offering her brother a seat between Sophia and herself; when a lively conversation commenced between the two, (during which Lord d'Arcy shewed no traces of the languor he had complained of,) and continued till it was interrupted by Mrs. De Clairville's ordering her carriage.

Lord d'Arcy, in leading Sophia down the stairs, expressed a hope that if not already deeply engaged; she would permit his requesting the honor of her hand some part of the evening at the Ashmore ball; and upon her smilingly replying she believed her engagements were not at present too numerous to prevent her complying with his wishes, he had scarcely time to add, "Then you will allow me to claim you for the first set;" Sophia answering in the affirmative, they were joined by Lord Deresford, who in assisting her into the carriage, mentioned his intention of calling the following day at Melcombe.

George had been prevailed upon to remain another day at the Priory, and when his mother and sisters drove from the door, he tried to persuade Lord d'Arcy to return with him to the ice: but his Lordship, complaining of a headache which had suddenly siezed him, George unwillingly departed without him.

* * * * *

"I congratulate you Sophia," cried Emily as they were returning home, "on the sudden conquest you have made."

"Sudden indeed, Emily," said Mrs. De Clairville smiling "if it is either of the gentlemen we have been in company with this morning."

"And yet, my dear aunt, you will find me a true prophetess: was not your vanity a little flattered, dear Sophia, by the evident admiration of one of them?"

“Not in the least,” replied Sophia, hastily
“if you are alluding to Lord Deresford.”

“I certainly was. Poor Harriet and I, felt quite in the back ground to-day. Not a single glance would the Viscount bestow upon us; and Lord d’Arcy was either fatigued with skaiting, or out of spirits, I know not which: but he was terribly dull. What little he did say, was addressed to my aunt; till you (who have the power, I really believe, of animating a statue) restored him to himself; and we then had the pleasure of seeing, once more, a smile upon his countenance.”

Sophia, without appearing to attend to the latter part of her cousin’s speech, said, “The Miss Deresfords at least gave you their attention.”

“We were indeed,” returned Harriet, “much indebted to their politeness for our

visit being so pleasant: and we may also thank George for assisting us to entertain them; for his droll remarks appeared to divert the sisters exceedingly."

"I hope Sophia," said Emily, "you found Lady Grace all you expected."

Sophia expressed the admiration she felt towards Lady Grace, and added a hope she should see much more of her, whilst she continued at the Priory.

Lady Grace was no less pleased with Sophia: her brother, happy to observe it, mentioned the wish Mrs. De Clairville had expressed of her spending some time at Melcombe Lodge:

"And now my dear sister," he continued, "I must make that lady's apologies to you, for not having found an opportunity this morning to make this request; but she has

deputed me to be her ambassador on the occasion; and I have only to add, if you are not averse to the plan, Mrs. De Clairville hopes to carry you home with her from Ashmore."

"I can possibly have no objection to it, my dear Arthur," she replied, "if my cousins will spare me for a few days. But, I should be ungrateful in the extreme for their undeviating kindness to me since I came thither, were I to appear eager to leave them on the first invitation."

"I believe I can set your mind at rest on this point, my dear considerate sister," he returned, affectionately taking her hand; "as it was only this morning, Deresford told me he had received a letter from his friend Sinclair, inviting himself and sisters to make one of a large party expected to assemble at Coldham, the latter end of next week. George was anxious we should

accompany him into Somersetshire, but finding me not willing to comply with his request, he intended returning a negative to Sir John, but if you are inclined to accept Mrs. De Clairville's invitation, there will no longer be any necessity for his doing this."

"And where are you to be all this time, my dear Arthur?"

"With you, I hope:" he smilingly answered. "Mrs. De Clairville has kindly pressed me to meet my friend Howard at the Lodge, who is expected with his wife and brother at that time."

"How delightfully you have arranged the whole affair," returned Lady Grace. "I can indeed have no longer an objection to the plan."

"Then," he replied, "I will seek out

Deresford, & settle the business before tea."

Lord d'Arcy now left his sister, and hastened to the library, where he found his cousin pacing the room, apparently in deep thought.

"What is the matter, George," said the latter, "that I find you so deeply meditating? I trust nothing unpleasant has occurred since we parted."

"Nothing; why should you imagine there had?" said lord Deresford, evidently embarrassed by the question.

"I am happy to find myself mistaken," returned his cousin; "it was your abstracted air when I entered, which led me to form, (what it appears was) a false conclusion. But let me hasten to mention the reason of my thus unceremoniously breaking in upon your meditation."

Lord d'Arcy then informed him, of the invitation his sister and himself had received, and added, "Therefore my dear George, you will no longer be under the unpleasant necessity of putting a negative on the wishes of your esteemed friend, Sir John Sinclair."

Lord Deresford, after a short pause, abruptly said, "You are a happy fellow, Arthur, and I envy you, upon my soul!"

Lord d'Arcy's colour heightened at this remark; but the Viscount, not observing it, continued, "I wish I could accompany you to Melcombe; but as that is impossible, since if I go any where, it must be into Somersetshire, I will try to banish all selfish feelings; and notwithstanding I shall feel the loss of your society, I will rejoice at the gratification awaiting you in this meeting with your friend; but you will I hope return to us at the expiration of this fortnight."

“Certainly; for a month if you wish it.”

“Then be it so. I will see my sisters, and then write to Sinclair.”

The cousins now separated; Lord d’Arcy with his suspicions confirmed, that Sophia had made more than a transient impression upon the Viscount. “And Why,” said he mentally, “should I feel surprised at it? George is certainly not so susceptible in general; but who can be an hour in Sophia De Clairville’s company, without feeling more than a common admiration for her. Deresford with a good person, great suavity of manners, and his own master, will probably find his attentions well received by the fair object of his adoration. Mr. De Clairville can have no reasonable objection to his daughter’s choice, and probably before my next visit to this part of the world, Sophia De Clairville will have become Lady Deresford.”

Lord d'Arcy had thus, in less than two minutes, settled the whole affair: not perhaps to his entire satisfaction, though he endeavoured to persuade himself into that belief. He now felt sorry he had asked Sophia to dance with him, as she would certainly have preferred his cousin for her partner. Again, he considered two dances would soon be over, and for the rest of the evening Lord Deresford might have the happiness of having her entirely to himself.

The next morning when George had left the Priory, the conversation reverted to the De Clairville family.

Miss Deresford said, she thought Harriet a charming girl, and added she was sorry they were going to lose her so soon.

"Where is she going?" enquired her brother.

"To be married," she laughingly replied.
"Miss De Clairville has been some time engaged to Colonel Howard."

"Of the—regiment of dragoon guards?"

"The same; but I believe he has left, or intends soon to leave the army. Have you not heard so, d'Arcy?"

"When I saw him in Town," returned his Lordship, "a month since, he still wore his red coat. His friends are strenuous with him to resign his commission; but Colonel Howard is both fond and proud of his profession, and has yet withstood their solicitations. I wish he may not have reason to repent this; as I heard it rumoured his regiment would be one of those it is supposed will be sent to America."

"In that case, Miss De Clairville will not marry him, I hope," said Miss Deresford.

“From all I have heard of this young lady,” replied Lord d’Arcy, “I am induced to believe, now she has promised him her hand, she will not make that an objection to their union.”

“But surely her father and mother will not consent to their daughter’s accompanying Colonel Howard to the seat of war.”

“There is, Howard has told me, throughout this family, said Lord d’Arcy, such a firm reliance on the Divine protection, such a strong belief in the directing hand of Providence, and such a conviction that “whatever is, is right,” that even should this trial await them, I feel assured the same firm reliance on the protection of heaven, will enable them to sustain it with christian patience and fortitude.”

“Happy will be the man who connects

himself with such a family!" warmly exclaimed Lord Deresford.

Lord d'Arcy smiled, it was but an effort; whilst the young ladies rallied the Viscount, giving him to understand they were aware he spoke feelingly on the subject. Lord Deresford coloured highly, but tried to laugh off the charge.

The conversation soon took a different turn, and the De Clairville family were not again mentioned.

CHAP. VIII.



There was a large party assembled in the drawing room at Ashmore, on the day appointed; some of whom were strangers to the De Clairvilles. Lolling on a sopha, near one of the fire-places, was a young man whose little *outré* figure was rendered more ridiculous by the evident complacency with which he was surveying himself in a pocket mirror.

“Emily,” whispered Sophia, “does not that odd little animal there, remind you of the baboon that so much diverted us at—

His contortions are certainly not so elegant; but he does his best to imitate him. I really should suspect him to be one of the same family; he only imitates the monkey, instead of the monkey imitating the man."

"Hush, my dear Sophia," said Emily, unable to refrain a smile at her cousin's remark, and the little man's appearance; "I fear he has already seen your wicked eyes directed towards him, as he is evidently watching us."

Sophia with great difficulty retained her gravity, whilst she kept her eyes fixed on the ground, that they might not betray her, during the examination they were undergoing from the beau, who after staring at them through his glass, said something in a low voice to a lady near him, and then languidly rising, strolled up to Charles Warburton, and pointing to Emily and Sophia, requested he would inform him, who, and what they were.

Charles, laughing said, if he felt inclined to be introduced to them, he should soon have his wish gratified.

“Cannot think of that,” returned the little man, stretching out his neck to the furthest extent, and drawing up his cravat at the same time, “till you answer my question. One of them is handsome enough, but confoundedly satirical, I suspect. I almost imagined she was quizzing me a few minutes since. Her companion is more to my taste. But who is she? any body? I mean does she move in certain circles? you understand me.”

“Not exactly : but here is Charlotte ; she will, I dare say.”

“What fair lady is Mr. Leigh making those enquiries about?” cried the lively girl, “if any one present, I can gratify his curiosity ; as I am tolerably well acquainted

with the birth, parentage, &c. of all assembled here."

"*Education* is included in that *et cetera* I hope;" said Charles, still laughing; "as my friend is anxious to learn whether that lady," pointing to Emily, "has been trained in certain circles, where alone she can have acquired a right to the title of Somebody."

"That lady," said Charlotte, gravely, "is in general thought handsome. She is not devoid of sense, though we might be induced to doubt the fact, as she has never felt any inclination to mix in any of the great circles, which a winter's residence in Town might introduce her to; but is content to live shut up in a country village, far removed from the metropolis: her only companions her father, and a *good sort of woman* who resides with them."

"Pon honor," returned the beau, shrugg-

ing his shoulders, "a very discreet, sensible young lady! and I must confess this description of her, exactly aswers to the idea I had formed in my own mind. It is easy to see by the turn of her head, she has not been accustomed to mix in the world."

Emily was at that time conversing with Mr. Warburton, who had taken a seat near her.

"My father," said Charles, "does not appear to be of your opinion, if we are to judge by the undivided attention he is paying his fair neighbour."

Charlotte at that moment caught the eyes of Sophia; the archness of their expression, as they glanced from her to the *outré* figure near her, was too much for her risibility to withstand, and unable to contain herself she laughed aloud.

Mr. Leigh, looking much astonished, enquired what had amused her so much. This only increased her mirth; till, observing him look seriously disturbed, she apologized for her rudeness; assuring him, at the same time, it was not possible to avoid laughing, as something indescribably ludicrous had struck her at the moment. "Did you not observe," she added, "what it was that occasioned me to transgress the rules of politeness?"

"No, upon my word, madam," he returned, "I cannot say I saw any thing to cause a smile."

"Well then, I will tell you. It was—but my mother beckons me; you shall hear it another time," and away she flew, leaving Mr. Leigh not a little out of humour at being thus left in the dark.

Not many minutes after, Charlotte had

quitted him, Emily removed to a different part of the room, where her father was conversing with Mr. De Clairville and Clement Warburton. Mr. Leigh observed her whispering to the gentleman he had heard was a baronet; who, immediately turning to an elderly lady, said to her, "My daughter, madam, tells me, she feels certain she has recognized in you, a friend of her dear Mrs. Sedley."

Mrs. Stapleton looking up, replied, "and am I in this lovely young woman, to trace a resemblance to the little Emily, I remember six years ago at Woodley Park?"

"She is indeed the same," returned Sir Charles smiling; "though a little grown since that time."

Mrs. Stapleton holding out her hand to Emily, after expressing her pleasure at this meeting, said, "and will you my dear

young lady, indulge an old woman by sitting near her a short time, that she may be able to believe you are indeed the pupil of her valued friend, and little Emily Rushbrook?"

Emily immediately drew a seat near her former acquaintance, and they were soon engaged in an interesting conversation.

Provoked with himself for the critique he had just passed on a lady he now discovered to be Miss Rushbrook and the daughter of a baronet, but more so with Charlotte for having misled him, Mr. Leigh felt so completely mortified, he spoke no more till dinner was announced; when, observing Sir Charles offer his arm to Mrs Stapleton to conduct her to the dining-room, and hoping to make some amends to his daughter for the mistaken opinion he had imbibed of her nonentity in the world of fashion, he now approached, and abruptly offered his

hand for the same purpose. Emily drew back, not a little surprised, when Charles Warburton, who was conversing with Ellen near her, observed what was passing, and said, "you must allow me, Miss Rushbrook, to introduce Mr. Leigh to you."

Emily slightly curtsied to the profound bow made her; but preferring her cousin's escort, took George's arm, and followed by Charles and Ellen, left the mortified little man to offer his attentions where they had a chance of being better received.

* * * * *

"We expected the family from the Priory would have been with us to day," observed Mr Warburton, soon after the party were seated at table; "but lord Deresford dispatched a messenger this morning to say, he was unexpectedly summoned to Town, on business that could not be post-

poned; and that his sisters were to accompany him, Lord d'Arcy, with lady Grace Montreuil, we hope to see either this evening or to-morrow."

"Lord d'Arcy," said a gentleman present, "is I understand to become one of the representatives of the town of—lord Lesley is expected to vacate his seat in the house, as the Earl of Templeton's death is daily looked for; and lord Montreuil it is said, has the power of returning any member he chooses, for that borough."

"From all I have seen of lord d'Arcy," said Mr. De Clairville, "I am induced to believe, which ever party he supports, will find him an honor and an ornament to it: but I confess I could rather wish he should be elected with the free consent of his constituents, than owe his seat in Parliament to the interest of his father, or any other of the ministerial party,"

“I have heard ” observed Clement Warburton, “that lord Montreuil whilst ambassador at— had the character, whether deservedly or not I cannot determine, of being the most arrogant man about court ; but I suppose he gave satisfaction at home, as he is now in great favour with the higher powers, and most probably wishes to strengthen his party by the accession of such a man as lord d’Arcy.”

“I am sure,” cried George with earnestness, “he does not partake of his father’s hauteur; for he appears to find his chief delight in making every body around him happy. O I hope nothing will prevent his coming hither this evening.”

“Is he very handsome?” enquired Eliza Warburton, of Sophia who was sitting next to her.

“You will soon have an opportunity.

of judging for yourself," she returned.

"But what is your opinion?"

"I scarcely have formed one."

"At all events you do not appear to have been much struck with him: Charlotte and I have heard he is a perfect Adonis".

"An Apollo, I suppose you mean;" said George casting an arch glance at Sophia. "But whoever he resembles, he is uncommonly handsome, and you think so Sophy, if you were to express your real sentiments."

"My dear son," said his mother, "who observed the heightened colour of her daughter, "why should you be hurt with your sister for not seeing with your eyes, the personal attractions of your friend, if she allow him all due credit for his other qualities?"

George was silenced by this reproof from his beloved mother; and Sophia soon recovered herself sufficiently to join her sister and cousin in the admiration they were expressing for lady Grace Montreuil.

When the ladies returned to the drawing-room, Emily introduced her cousins to Mrs. Stapleton. Never did old age sit more gracefully upon any one than on that lady. Fond of the society of young persons, and always eager to promote any little scheme of pleasure for them, she was in return, an universal favorite. Though in her seventy-eighth year, her mind was still in its full vigour; and having all her life enjoyed excellent health, she appeared younger than she really was.

Mrs. Stapleton, or as many called her even then, Miss Stapleton, would sometimes sportively adduce her never having married, as a great want of taste in the other sex ;

but it was generally known, a disappointment in early life, had prevented her forming another connection

The young people had this evening, as usual, gathered round this venerable woman, who was relating a pleasing anecdote of a naval character she had known in her youth ; when Sophia, struck with the resemblance it bore to her uncle, exclaimed with all the energy of her nature. "Such would have been the conduct of my uncle John, had he been placed in a similar situation;" then turning to her mother, her fine countenance glowing with the enthusiasm the subject had called forth, to enquire if she were not right, her eyes rested on Lord d,Arcey who, with Lady Grace, had just entered the room : but so interested had she been in Mrs. Stapleton's relation, that till that moment they had not been observed by her. The expression of his Lordship's eyes, as they met hers, strong-

ly depicted his admiration of the energetic speaker.

Lady Grace coming forward to greet her friend, enabled Sophia to hide, in some degree, the perturbation her brother's look had caused: and lord d'Arcy now approaching, was welcomed with many expressions of pleasure by Harriet and Ellen; but their sister still felt too much embarrassed, to receive his compliments with her usual ease.

Lord d'Arcy observed it, and would have given worlds to know what had occasioned it. Never had he appeared more animated; without acknowledging it to himself, he felt relieved by Lord Deresford's absence: his spirits rose in proportion, and both old and young confessed he was indeed the most fascinating man they had ever seen.

Mrs Stapleton and his Lordship were soon excellent friends ; and before the other gentlemen joined them, the cheerful old lady declared to Mrs. de Clairville, she was gone many ages in love.

Lady Grace appeared to feel much pleasure in the society of the de Clairville family ; her spirits were never very high ; but she had now regained her usual cheerfulness, and gratified her friends by the assurance, that she had never been so happy since she had left her mother.

The entrance of the tea equipage, presently followed by the gentlemen from the dining room, rather deranged the comfortable chatting party round the fire. Sir Charles and Mr. de Clairville expressed their pleasure at seeing Lord d' Arcy ; George was in extasies of delight at meeting him again, though he had only parted from him two days before ; and Mr. War-

burton and his sons soon engaged him in conversation, to the great mortification of some of the party.

Eliza Warburton, fully resolved upon conquest, soon contrived to be requested to favor the company with a specimen of her musical abilities; and Mr. Leigh always anxious to appear a prominent figure, proposed making up a little concert, and offered his services either on the violin tenor, or violoncello, and entreated Miss Eliza would oblige him, with presiding at the harp or piano. But aware she was not equal to playing an accompaniment on the first, beyond that of a song, she preferred taking the piano-forte; while Ellen, with a little difficulty, was prevailed on to seat herself at the harp: Charles who was a very fair performer on the violin, made choice of that instrument: Clement took up a tenor, leaving Mr. Leigh the violoncello; but his performance upon it was

so execrable, it entirely spoiled the effect of the piece they were playing.

Charlotte and Sophia were almost convulsed with laughter at the looks of annoyance from time to time directed to him by Ellen; whose fine ear could scarcely endure to hear him play so cruelly out of tune, Lord d'Arcy, who was sitting next Sophia, felt it impossible to resist joining in her mirth; which was further increased when Mr. Leigh at the conclusion of the concerto, highly delighted with the applause it received, proposed playing another; but Ellen entreating to be excused assisting at it, left her seat and retired to some distance from the party, to recover a little from the discordant tones she had so long been compelled to listen to. Here she was soon joined by Charles Warburton, who had felt his nerves equally jarred with her own.

Eliza, now determining to charm all hearts, sat down to her harp; and as she leaned over it, in one of her newest attitudes, had just ventured to sweep a chord, when George approached the sofa where Lord d'Arcy and Sophia were sitting, and after whispering in the ear of the former, "Now is your time, I'm off." quickly disappeared. Lord d'Arcy laughed, but not just then feeling any inclination to follow his young friend's example, quietly kept his seat, apparently, listening with attention to a ballad Eliza was singing.

"Your senses, my Lord," said Sophia archly smiling, when the young lady had concluded her song, "have been so entirely absorbed by the powers of Miss Warburton's voice, I have more than once addressed you without being able to engage your attention.

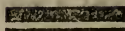
"Impossible," he exclaimed with

warmth, "that my stupidity can have been so great, but that the sound of your voice must have roused me from it,"

Sophia confused by the tone this was spoken in, replied, scarcely knowing what she said, "Indeed! I was mistaken then."

Lord d'Arcy now as vainly sought to engage her attention. She had become thoughtful in her turn, and to his repeated questions, he could only gain a monosyllable in reply. At length recollecting herself, she endeavoured to throw off this abstraction; and though the effort was attended with difficulty, she succeeded in once more appearing at her ease; and during the remainder of the evening, no one perceived any diminution of her usual gaiety.

CHAP. IX.



Charlotte knowing Sophia was as fond of walking as herself, she next morning proposed they should execute their own commissions at C—, (a small market town situated about two miles from Ashmore,) instead of sending the groom as had been intended. Sophia readily assented to this plan; and as soon as breakfast was over, they left the room to prepare for their excursion.

The day was bright though cold; and they set forward in high spirits; Charlotte

congratulating herself and friend at having escaped the annoyance of Mr. Leigh's company; who would most certainly have insisted on attending them, had he known of their intention, which on that account she had taken good care to prevent his having a suspicion of.

When nearly half way on their road to C—, they heard their names vociferated in no very gentle tone, and on turning round to discover who had hailed them, they saw George with Lord d'Arcy hastening to overtake them, and in another moment they were by their side.

“ You thought yourselves very clever now, I dare say,” said the former laughing, “ to leave the house without being observed; but Lord d'Arcy was too cunning for you: he caught a glimpse of the feathers in Sophia's hat, as they waved in the breeze, just as we were on the point of

putting on our skaits, and immediately proposed joining you. I confess I had rather have remained where I was, as there was a promise of excellent skaiting, but my politeness would not permit of my allowing his Lordship to proceed without me; so here we are ready to esquire you whithersoever it is your pleasure, fair damsels, to take us. But pray tell me," he continued, "why you did not mention your intention of walking at breakfast?"

Upon hearing their reasons, he exclaimed, "O, then I am no longer surprized at your silence, if it arose from the fear of your being accompanied by that man, who is the most conceited little puppy I ever had the pleasure of seeing before. But do you prefer supporting each other to accepting an arm of your escorts? which of you will take mine?"

Lord d'Arcy had the same moment offer-

ed his to Sophia ; in crossing what in summer was a narrow stream, but which had during the winter overflowed its bounds and was now a sheet of ice, and notwithstanding the assistance afforded by her careful escort, she lost her footing, and was only saved from falling by his involuntarily throwing his arms around her.

The unpleasant sensation added to the alarm she felt made Sophia turn so pale, Lord d'Arcy fearing she would faint, called to Charlotte for her assistance ; and the latter apprehensive her friend had received some injury, entreated George to hasten home and order a carriage for his sister. He was setting off with great speed, when Sophia detained him, assuring them there was no occasion for his going as she believed herself more frightened than hurt ; nor would she hear of returning before their commissions were duly executed.

Lord d'Arcy observing she still trembled, insisted on her taking his arm and followed by George and Charlotte they soon arrived at the place of their destination.

Miss Warburton and her friend had not been long at the milleners before a carriage drove to the door from which descended a very fine woman, though evidently not young in despite of rouge and every advantage from dress. Two ladies apparently her daughters accompanied her, and Charlotte had scarcely time to inform Sophia they were the Fitzarthurs, to whom the latter had not been introduced, before they entered.

“Miss Warburton!” exclaimed the three ladies in a breath, “we little expected the pleasure of meeting you here. How are you all at home?”

Whilst Charlotte was returning their compliments, they were staring her companion out of countenance,

“Who is she,” whispered Miss Louisa to her sister. Miss Fitzarthur’s only answer was a shake of the head; plainly intimating she was equally ignorant with herself.

Sophia had on their entrance risen to look at some gloves one of the assistants had brought for her inspection, and before the young ladies could have their curiosity satisfied by applying to Charlotte for information, Lord d’Arcy and George who had stepped into a bookseller’s shop for a few minutes entered.

“Lord d’Arcy here too,” said Mrs. Fitzarthur smiling graciously upon him, “how many more agreeable surprizes are

we to meet with this morning? Is Lord Deresford with you?

Lord d'Arcy did not appear to participate in the happiness Mrs. Fitzarthur and her daughters expressed at this rencontre; and merely saying his cousin was not at present at the priory, he slightly bowed as he passed them to join Sophia, who was chusing a watch-ribbon for her brother.

Upon perceiving her employment, he playfully requested she would allow him to be distinguished by her colours that evening, and entreated her to select a ribbon for him also.

“ Indeed Sophia, ” said George, “ you ought, as yours and Miss Warburton’s knights, to reward us both, when you consider how very careful and attentive we have been in our perilous walk. If Charlotte were not at present engaged, I should

ask her to give me her colours; but you must be her proxy: and I am sure your escort deserves it more than I do; as had it not been for him, you might have danced all night with Major Benchs.

“If your brother, ” said Lord d’Arcy, “thinks me entitled to such a reward for my good fortune in having preserved you from accident I will take advantage of his kindness, and entreat you not to refuse me this favor though perhaps” he continued, “I ought not to urge that plea; as the consciousness of having saved you from pain, would alone have been a high reward to me.”

Sophia blushed, and laughing said, “It is impossible to refuse such a humble request from my gallant preserver, so strongly supported by my brother’s, interest, who has indeed made me fully sensible of my obligation to you by mentioning the

much dreaded gentleman it might otherwise have been my fate to be engaged to through the whole evening. Allow me then," she continued, turning to Lord d'Arcy, "to fix on this beautiful dark blue, it is a favorite colour of mine as it always reminds me of my dear uncle, whose profession is distinguished by it."

Lord d'Arcy did not appear insensible to the compliment his fair companion was perhaps unconsciously paying him in presenting him with her acknowledged favorite colour; as gracefully bowing his thanks, he gallantly pressed the precious gift to his lips, and the next moment carefully deposited it in his bosom.

Mrs. Fitzarthur and her daughters had overheard great part of what was passing at the other end of the shop; and not a little mortified at finding themselves overlooked for they knew not whom, were

again going to enquire of Miss Warburton the name of her companion, as Sophia, having completed her purchases, informed her friend she was ready to depart. Charlotte entirely forgetting she ought to have introduced her to the Fitzarthurs, merely saying she hoped to see them in the evening, followed Sophia from the shop, nor till the latter recalled it to her recollection, did the omission occur to her.

“What!” said George; “are these forward looking girls the Miss Fitzarthurs? I really thought they would have swallowed poor Lord d’Arcy at a mouthful. And was that their mother? How I do hate to see such painted dolls! I am sure I should not love and respect my mother as I now do, if I saw her rouge like Mrs. Fitzarthur.”

“If she were present at this speech,” said Sophia gravely, “I am sure she

would feel more hurt at hearing you express your dislike of Mrs. Fitzarthur in so violent a manner, than gratified at receiving a compliment at her expence. ”

“ Well, I dare say you are right, dear Sophy, I have expressed myself rather coarsely ; and I see by the marked approbation Lord d’Arcy’s countenance evinced during your lecture, he is of the same opinion, I therefore humbly entreat pardon of both.”

Lord d’Arcy laughed ; but his colour was much heightened by George’s remark ; and turning to Charlotte he sought to hide his confusion by making some enquiries of her, relative to the company expected that night at Ashmore.

The sun had born so much power during the morning that they found their road back so very indifferent it required the

whole attention of the gentlemen, to preserve their fair companions from any further accident, and for the remainder of the walk no conversation passed, except an occasional remark on the state of the path before them.

Upon reaching the grounds Mr. Singleton, (one of the party at that time in the house,) met them. He had known Charlotte from a child, and next to her father she loved and respected this worthy man, who was one of Mr. Warburton's earliest friends, and was now come to spend some time with him accompanied by his son, a Major in the——regiment of Guards.

Mr. Singleton good humouredly scolded Charlotte and Sophia for leaving him so many hours, and not informing him of their intended excursion. “Do you not think,” he continued, “had I received a hint of it I should not have been as ready as my Lord

d'Arcy to offer my attendance? though perhaps," he added with a smile, "that very fear might be the cause of your silence."

"No indeed, my dear old friend," returned Charlotte affectionately putting her arm within his; "had it been only your attendance we feared the offer of, we should not have stolen out of the house so cautiously, but the truth is we dreaded——"

"Your son would also accompany us. Was not that the truth?" said a voice at her elbow.

Charlotte started; it was the Major's who was returning to the house from a different part of the grounds.

"This is very unfair Major Singleton," she exclaimed, "to come upon us thus unawares, and to punish you, I will not now explain the true and real reason of our

silence." and effecting much displeasure, Charlotte walked on, Mr. Singleton laughing, declared he would not be punished for his son's delinquency hastily followed the offended fair one, leaving the Major to make his peace with her as well as he could.

Sophia and Lord d'Arcy meantime walked quietly on; much amused by the feigned anger of Charlotte, and the effect it had upon Mortimer Singleton.

"Is there not," said Lord d'Arcy to Sophia, "a little penchant felt there, for your lively friend?"

"At times I have suspected there is," she replied, "but have no certainty on which to rest my suspicions."

"I think we cannot both be mistaken," he returned, indeed who that has observed

the constant direction of Major Singleton's eyes; the animation that lights up every feature when Miss Warburton approaches, or the restlessness so apparent when any other man engages her attention even for a moment; not to mention the sudden transition from despondency the deepest to delight the most ardent, when she turns from others to address him, but must acknowledge these are symptoms of that passion which in some part or other of every man's life makes his happiness or his misery."

"What is all this about despondency and delight?" said George who now joined them. "Have you only now found out that Charles Warburton is desperately in love with Ellen?"

"My dear George," said his sister, "what are you talking of?"

“ Why of what I mean, dear Sophy, that Charles can speak to, look at, nor think of any one but your sweet sister and mine, Ellen De Clairville, spinster: and I thought Lord d’Arcy was alluding to this when I joined you. But come, we must march, aye to quick time too, if we are to dine as soon as Mrs. Warburton talked of this morning.”

Mrs. Warburton had proposed deferring the duties of the toilet until after dinner, which was readily agreed to by her guests, and as soon therefore, as the meal was concluded, the ladies withdrew to their apartments. Ellen and Lady Grace had passed the morning together: and mutually pleased with each other, the hours flew so fast, that they could scarcely persuade themselves, when the first dinner bell sounded, it could be so near dinner.

Harriet and Emily had been invited by Miss Warburton into her dressing-room, when her sister and Sophia set off on their excursion; had she suspected Lord d'Arcy would have been their companion in the walk to C—, nothing would have prevented her joining the party.

In happy ignorance of the fact, she left the dining-room and hastening to her apartment commenced the business of decoration with the earnestness its importance required.

Eliza had never taken more pains; and her dress was even more than usually fantastic this evening. When her toilet was completed, perfectly satisfied with herself she hastened to the drawing-room, hoping to impress Lord d'Arcy with the conviction, that unlike the generality of her sex, she spent but little time in decorating her person.

Unfortunately his Lordship was not there; when after waiting till she was tired, the fair Eliza repaired to her sister's apartment, whom she found still under the hands of her *femme-de-chambre*.

Charlotte upon seeing her sister enter, armed at all points for conquest, jocosely enquired in the name of all that was wonderful, how it happened she should be ready the first: but seeing a cloud arise upon the brow of her fancifully attired sister, she added, "But I ought to account for your finding me so backward. The fact is, Sophia and I got into so long a chat upon our morning's adventures, we entirely lost sight of the time, she has not left me many minutes; and I immediately summoned Kitty, who I know was almost out of patience."

Eliza now enquired who her sister had met at C—.

“ Only those dear disagreeable Fitzarthur,” returned Charlotte, “ who will not soon forgive Sophia I suspect, for entirely engrossing the attention of Lord d’Arcy.

“ Lord d’Arcy !” repeated Eliza, “ Did he accompany you in your walk ? I thought Charlotte it was the wish both of yourself and Sophia, the gentlemen should not be acquainted with your intention of going to C—.”

“ You are perfectly correct, my dear sister ; it was the wish of both they should not hear of it, but Lord d’Arcy and George discovered us as they were skaiting, and overtook us before we reached the town.”

Eliza did not appear quite pleased at learning this ; she was silent a few minutes and then said, “ May I enquire if Lord

d'Arcy has engaged either you or Sophia any part of this evening."

"I can only say he has not honoured me so far," replied her sister, "Sophia must answer for herself."

"Who then do you dance with to-night?"

"My dear Eliza," Charlotte laughingly returned, "I shall begin to fancy myself in the Inquisition, and you one of the judges of it, before whom I am brought to answer these multiplicity of questions. The next thing I shall expect will be to find myself delivered over to the familiars, to have the *question* indeed put to me; but happily here comes one to assist me. Dear Sophia," she continued, as the latter entered, "in mercy to your friend help her to reply to some of these interrogations. The first of which is, Are you engaged to dance with Lord d'Arcy?"

“ I believe,” said Sophia, as she stooped to pick up a sprig of myrtle, she had conveniently dropped, “ I am to have the pleasure of dancing with his Lordship the first set.”

“ And pray may I enquire,” said Charlotte, “ if this was settled at Miss Johnson’s this morning?

“ Who is the Grand Inquisitor now?” cried Eliza.

“ I have only taken your place for one moment, brother judge,” said her sister with affected gravity, “ Allow me before I resign it to you, to hear the prisoner’s answer to the question I have put to her. Did Lord d’Arcy this morning, engage you Sophia De Clairville to dance with him this evening?”

“ He did not.”

“If I were not going to resign my office to Eliza, I would have enquired, or insisted on knowing on pain of being condemned to dance the whole evening with his Lordship, when and where this matter was settled. But you are a sly girl not to mention a syllable of this before. Ah ! Sophia, notwithstanding that innocent face of yours, I greatly suspect you of a design upon the heart of your noble partner.”

Sophia colouring, assured her she had never been more mistaken, “Besides,” she continued, “you forget he is an engaged man,”

“No I do not ; nor that to-night he sports the colours of the fair one who holds him in her chains. Why Sophia, I declare you could not blush deeper, were you the lady who had forged them.”

The little piece of blue ribbon had not

escaped the observation of Charlotte in the morning; and much amused at seeing Lord d'Arcy so carefully preserve it; she had treasured it in her mind till a fair opportunity occurred to rally her friend upon it; and she now employed it so well, that Sophia was truly glad when a summons arrived from Mrs. Warburton to join the party below.

Eliza had left them some time, and arm in arm these two beautiful young women descended to the drawing-room, where some of the company had already assembled.

Sophia this evening even surpassed herself: all animation and gaiety, to look at her was to feel in spirits, and Lord d'Arcy found himself the counterpart of what he had described Major Singleton, nor could he for a moment take his eyes from the fascinating object before him. Lady Grace and Ellen were as finely formed; and Har-

riet and Emily were in general considered handsome ; but the palm of beauty was this evening universally awarded to Sophia, for never had she appeared more attractively lovely.

The ball was opened by Miss Warburton and the Marquis of Ormondsty, he was not so handsome, she confessed as Lord d'Arcy, but he was of higher rank ; and Eliza heroically determining to think no more of one, whose whole attention was evidently directed to another, levelled all the artillery of her charms at the heart of the Marquis ; flattering herself she might succeed better, than in the attack she had made on the heart of the insensible d'Arcy.

The late Marquis of Ormondsty was related to Mr. De Clairville, but from some unhappy misunderstanding, the families had not interchanged visits for some years.

His son, with the title, did not inherit his father's prejudices. On the contrary, he made the first advances to Mr. De Clairville, who met them with the greatest cordiality. The young Marquis had been several times at Melcombe since the death of his father; and it was supposed by the world, one of the daughters of that house would certainly become Marchioness of Ormondsty.

The Fitzarthurs, contrary to their usual practice, were amongst the first guests who arrived. The young ladies wishing to astonish the *natives*, appeared in their last court dresses, which covered with spangles and foil, were a strong contrast to the elegant simplicity, that, with the exception of Eliza, marked the appearance of the Ashmore females.

Louisa had discovered Ellen; and was expressing her pleasure at meeting her there, when Sophia with her partner, passed them in their way to the set then forming.

“ Can you tell me, my dear Miss De Clairville,” she cried, “ the name of that lady who is dancing with Lord d’Arcy? we saw her with Miss Warburton this morning at C——”

“ I certainly ought to know it,” returned Ellen smiling “ as she is my twin sister.”

Miss Fitzarthur, happy she had not committed herself, replied “ You indeed astonish me: there is not the least resemblance between you. I think it was very strange Miss Warburton did not introduce us to each other when we met at Johnson’s.”

Charles Warburton now approaching to claim Ellen for his partner, she was prevented replying to this speech; and Louisa joined her mother and sister, who were engaged in criticising with no small degree of acrimony, the face, person, and dress of Sophia.

So entirely to engross the attention of Lord d'Arcy, the only man in the room worth thinking of, the Marquis of Ormond-sty accepted, was a crime not to be forgiven: nor when they learned who she was, were they inclined to view her with more favourable eyes.

Sophia meanwhile, unconscious either of the admiration or envy she excited, was dancing with the greatest spirit; her partner appeared equally animated; and when the set was finished, and Major Singleton came forward to claim her for the next, Lord d'Arcy could scarcely be persuaded the first dance was over. But on finding he must resign her hand to the Major he would not permit him to carry off his prize, till Sophia had consented to dance with him the supper set.

Mrs. Fitzarthur, whose eyes continued to follow every movement of Lord d'Arcy;

now observing him disengaged, rose with the intention of joining him; which on perceiving, he instantly decamped from that part of the room. Lady Grace, who was dancing with the Marquis of Ormondsty caught his eye at that moment, and left her place in the set to speak to him.

“ Why are you not dancing, my dear Arthur ? ” she exclaimed, “ I thought you did not know what it was to feel tired at a ball ? ”

“ Will you, my Lord, allow me to introduce you to a partner ? ” cried Mr. Leigh, who had overheard in part the question Lady Grace had put to her brother. There are some young ladies here,” he continued, smiling facetiously, “ who would be happy in the honour of dancing with your Lordship.”

Lord d’Arcy thanked him, but declined

his kind offer, saying he did not intend to dance any more at present.

Mr. Leigh felt highly offended at his services being so slighted: yet wishing to appear intimate with a man of his consequence, he smoothed his brow, and began making some remarks on the company: but Lord d'Arcy was then engaged in watching the light and graceful movements of Sophia who was going down the dance. Mr. Leigh finding his Lordship had not heard what he considered far too good to be lost, leaned forward to touch him on the arm, at the instant that he seeing Sophia had arrived at the bottom of the set, darted forward to join her: when the poor little man unfortunately losing his balance from the rapidity of Lord d'Arcy's movements, to the amusement of some, but the dismay of others, measured his length on the floor!

Not great the fall, but marvellously so,

was the rage of the mortified Mr. Leigh as he darted an angry glance towards the innocent cause of his misfortune ; who ignorant of the share he had had in it, was gaily conversing with Sophia and Major Singleton, at some distance from the spot.

Charlotte endeavoured gravely to pity the prostrate hero : but in defiance of all her efforts, the mirth his discomfited appearance excited, would not be restrained and the endeavour to hide it only encreased his rage ; till at length he determined immediately to quit the house.

Mr. Warburton understanding what had occurred, came forward and by sympathising in the distress of his guest, peace was, in some measure restored, which Lord d'Arcy's apologies, after hearing how much he had been implicated in the disturbance, assisted in establishing ; and the

dance, Mr. Leigh's unfortunate fall had interrupted, was again resumed with the same spirit as before, till supper was announced.

Emily unwilling to add to the mortification of Mr. Leigh, had unhesitatingly accepted him as her partner for the set preceding it. Since he had discovered who she was, he had paid her the most devoted attention, and now seated by her side at supper, he looked some inches higher than usual: and the air of self-importance visible on every feature, amused all around them. He scarcely allowed his fair partner to attend to any one but himself, till observing Lord d'Arcy and Sophia who were placed almost opposite, he enquired of Emily if she did not join in the opinions of many that night, that it would be a match. Upon perceiving her look not a little surprized, he continued, "I dare say ma'am you think with

me that Lord Montreuil will never hear of it. It is a pity Lord d'Arcy should encourage Miss De Clairville to hope he ever will. The Earl ma'am would sooner I am convinced, see his son in the grave than consent to his connecting himself with the daughter of a commoner be he ever so rich."

"You are not perhaps aware sir," replied Emily much provoked, "that the lady you are speaking of is my cousin."

Mr. Leigh, a little confused assured her he meant no disrespect to Miss De Clairville, but the world supposed Lord d'Arcy engaged to Lady Lucretia Selburne, the eldest daughter of the Marquis of Longueville.

"I believe sir," returned Emily coolly, "you need not fear that my cousin is ignorant of this engagement. We heard the marriage was to take place some time

before Lord d'Arcy's arrival in this neighbourhood."

Emily knew she was not quite correct in this ; but greatly provoked Mr. Leigh should be so quick sighted in discovering the commencement of an attachment she herself had only just began to suspect, wished at once to check his desire of spreading his suspicions farther.

Sophia observing a cloud on the usually serene brow of her cousin, leaned over the table to learn the cause of it.

Emily assured her she was unconscious of any except the heat of the room. Sophia anxiously advised her to leave it, and offered to accompany her ; but Mr. Leigh suspecting he was the occasion of her change of countenance, wished to banish the subject from her mind, and endeavoured as much as possible to turn her thoughts another way, and Emily angry with herself for having

attracted the attention of Sophia, after declining her kind offer, ably seconded his efforts for that purpose; and till Mrs. Warburton relieved her by giving the signal of retreat, exerted herself so well that Sophia no longer apprehensive for her, gave her undivided attention to Lord d'Arcy.

Upon returning to the ball-room, Ellen by the desire of the Miss Fitzarthurs, introduced them to Sophia; when they expressed to her how much inclined they felt to be angry with Charlotte for omitting this ceremony in the morning.

Sophia replied, she could only lament that her absence from home, when they favoured Melcombe with calling, should have rendered it necessary.

Her new acquaintance professed themselves equally sorry for the circumstance, and after a few more civil speeches

on both sides, Miss Louisa putting on one of her sweetest smiles said, "You have been dancing, I think all the evening; are you fond of the exercise?"

"Were we to judge by the spirit Miss De Clairville went down the dance before supper, observed the elder Miss Fitzarthur, "we might suppose she was excessively fond of it. But what is become of your partner?" she continued, directing what she thought an arch glance at Sophia.

Lord d'Arcy's appearance at that instant precluded the necessity of a reply. He apologised to Sophia for his absence, and drawing her arm within his, as he led her to the set, accounted for it by informing her he had been called out to his servant, who had been taken suddenly ill.

"I hope my Lord," said Sophia earnestly, "you did not leave him on my

account. If I thought you had, I should feel little gratification in your return."

"Indeed my dear Miss De Clairville," he returned, "I would not have quitted him, had there been any necessity for my remaining longer. I have ordered him to go to bed, and as he appeared much recovered, I trust to-morrow will find him perfectly restored. He has lived in our family from a boy, and I am so much attached to my poor Roberts, that I confess to you I found myself quite unmanned on finding him to all appearances, so dangerously ill."

"Then why not return to him," cried Sophia eagerly. "I have had my share of dancing this evening, and shall be perfectly contented to remain a spectator the remainder of it."

She looked so much in earnest as she

said this, that Lord d'Arcy charmed at discovering so much feeling and consideration in one of so lively a disposition, thrown off his guard, siezed the hand that rested on his arm, and had half raised it to his lips, when the recollection of where he was, made him as suddenly drop it, and colouring almost as deeply as Sophia, he said, " I see you want to get rid of me, but before I go, let me have your promise, should there be any more dancing after I return you will allow me to claim you again."

Sophia blushing, gave the required assent, and Lord d'Arcy then leaving her, she seated herself on a vacant bench at a little distance from the company, to recover in some degree from the agitation his Lordship's manner had excited. But not long was she permitted to remain at quiet, Emily having finished her task of dancing with Mr. Leigh, seeing Sophia alone, has-

tened to join her and Charlotte and Major Singleton almost immediately followed. The former observing Mr. Leigh's air of devotion when he addressed Emily, determined not to let him escape, and affecting to whisper, but sufficiently audibly for his fair mistress to overhear, said, "Have you contrived my good friend to fix Miss Rushbrook's head on her shoulders more to your satisfaction; or has the *Baronet's daughter* so much enchanted you that you no longer observe the unfortunate turn in it which you pronounced could belong to no one who had been accustomed to move in *certain circles*?"

Mr. Leigh much confused, entreated Charlotte to speak lower; but finding his tormentor rather elevated than dropped her voice, he could bear it no longer, and pretending the heat of the room overcame him, made his escape from it as fast as he could. Emily much diverted with the lit-

tle she had overheard, desired to hear what had induced the little man to fly so fast? Charlotte answered her by giving a most ludicrous account of what had passed the day before, which not a little amused her auditors.

“Your saucy eyes Sophia,” she continued. “are not you find, so much admired by Mr. Leigh as by others of our party, which may perhaps be accounted for by the different expression they assume at different times. For instance, when turned upon Emily’s lover, they are thought satirical; but when they look towards the knight of the blue ribbon, they appear all softness, sweetness and every thing that is charming. Ah Sophia!” she continued in a whisper, “I have discovered the lady to night, you hinted to me was engaged to Lord d’Arcy and as I told you I should, by her colours, which were worn instead of the elegant

chain I admired so much this morning. But look not so alarmed, I promise to keep your secret. Yet may I enquire where Lord d'Arcy is gone?"

Sophia explained the cause of his absence, at the same time requesting his sister might not hear that night of poor Roberts's illness.

Lady Grace had appeared during the evening, in high spirits; but now beginning to feel a little fatigued, when Emily and Charlotte once more joined the dancers, Sophia persuaded her to sit quietly with her. The Marquis of Ormondsty joining them, they continued to amuse themselves in observing the votaries of Terpsichore, and in listening to the ridiculous remarks of their companions upon the couples as they reached the end of the dance.

The company at length began to disperse; when Sophia giving over all hopes of seeing Lord d'Arcy any more that evening, proposed retiring; and Lady Grace readily assenting, they hastened from the festive scene. The rest of the party only waited for the final adieus of the remainder of the guests before they followed their example; and at a very late or rather early hour, most of the inhabitants of Ashmore sought their apartments, to sleep off the fatigue of the evening.

CHAP. X.



Lord d'Arcy finding his servant more seriously ill than he had at first apprehended, gave over all idea of returning to the ball-room, but sent off an express to C—for the apothecary of that town; who on seeing Roberts, pronounced him to have every symptom of a violent fever coming on. Finding the house-keeper kept a medicine chest by her for the relief of the poorer inhabitants of Ashmore, he soon made up what was proper for his patient, and after giving every necessary direction, he

departed, promising to see him again in a few hours.

Lord d'Arcy could not be prevailed upon to leave the bedside of his servant, the poor fellow's fever, as the apothecary had predicted, rapidly encreased; he soon became delirious, and it was found necessary to confine him to his bed.

His master was the only person who had the least influence with him; and from no hand but his could he be persuaded to take the medicines ordered him,

Lord d'Arcy had at length the pleasure of perceiving him grow more composed, and soon after fall into a quiet sleep; and fearing he might be disturbed by some accidental noise, he sent all from the room, and taking up a book, endeavoured to amuse himself with it, till the arrival of Mr. Unwin the apothecary, who found

Roberts much better than he had left him, and pronounced him out of danger.

Sophia had slept as little as Lord d'Arcy. She had taken leave of Lady Grace for the night, at the door of the latter's apartment, and Ellen on coming up to bed found her apparently in a deep sleep; but Sophia was not even inclined to rest, though to avoid conversation, she suffered her sister to believe the contrary. Her thoughts reverted to all that had occurred that day. The marked attentions she had received from Lord d'Arcy in the course of it, the look of ardent admiration which accompanied his action as he left her to attend his servant, was not forgotten; and for the first time she began to question her heart upon the evident satisfaction it felt in dwelling upon these and a thousand other circumstances, which, trivial in themselves, yet betrayed an interest in every thing relating to her.

From Lord d'Arcy, Sophia's thoughts reverted to his family. She was aware of the Earl's excessive pride, and the disdain he always expressed for all those that were beneath him in rank; and she was conscious how little chance there was of his ever giving his consent to his son's connecting himself with the daughter of a country gentleman. In such reflections as these, Sophia passed the time that ought to have been devoted to rest, and she arose in the morning not much refreshed by a sleepless night.

As the sisters were dressing, they learned from their servant that Lord d'Arcy had not been in bed since he left the ball-room, but had passed the time in his servant's room.

“Dear me! ladies,” Margaret continued, “what an angel of a master my Lord is; Mrs. Allet told me just now he

has been so anxious all night about poor Roberts, and talked so kindly to him when the poor fellow was beside himself, that it would have done any one's heart good to have heard him."

"And is Lord d'Arcy with him still?" enquired Ellen.

"Dear me! ma'am, that he is," returned Margaret, "notwithstanding Lady Grace has been praying him so to go to bed. But he says he cannot hear of it at present."

Lady Grace at this moment begged to be admitted.

"My dear friends," she cried, "I am miserable upon my brother's account; for I greatly fear he will be a sufferer by his humanity. The apothecary told Mrs.

Allet, when he was first called in, that he was apprehensive Roberts's would prove a very bad fever; and yet Arthur has been the whole night by his bedside."

"I trust," said Sophia, turning very pale, "there is no danger of infection to be apprehended."

"I wish I could flatter myself there was not," returned her Ladyship, "But my dear Sophia, what is the matter with you? I hope you are not also ill."

Sophia greatly alarmed lest Lord d'Arcy should suffer from his attention to his servant, yet fearful the interest she took in him should be observed, tried to answer in a cheerful tone, but the effort was too much for her, and she burst into tears.

Lady Grace and Ellen much alarmed,

were on the point of summoning Mrs. De Clairville, when Sophia entreated they would not ; assuring them she was only a little nervous, which she attributed to the fatigue of the preceding day.

Lady Grace affectionately pressing her hand, said she was afraid she had assisted in oversetting her by her alarming account of poor Roberts. “ You know not,” she continued, “ how much Arthur is attached to him : but I trust all will end well. Come my dear girl, you are better again ; and I hope able to accompany us to Charlotte’s dressing-room, where she invited me to breakfast with you.”

Sophia entreated her to proceed thither with Ellen, promising to follow in a few minutes. When left alone she blamed herself severely for allowing her feelings thus to overcome her, but happy to think

she had this time escaped detection, she determined to be more on her guard in future, lest the secret she could no longer hide from herself, should be betrayed to others.

Lord d'Arcy's behaviour astonished and perplexed her. Why if he were really engaged to another, did he seek every opportunity of engrossing her attention? The evening before, he had danced with no one except herself; and what did those frequent looks of tenderness and ardent admiration imply? Then recollecting this was not the way to recover herself, she bathed her eyes before she joined her friends, heroically determining to give no encouragement to one, who she believed was intended by his family to marry another.

On leaving her chamber to proceed to Charlotte's dressing-room, the object of

her thoughts appeared at the farther end of the gallery. Sophia would have given worlds to have avoided him, but that was now impossible as she saw he had already perceived her. Lord d'Arcy's eyes at meeting her sparkled with delight, till observing her pale countenance his animation instantly fled, and he enquired after her health in a tone so anxious, she could scarcely restrain the tears which had again filled her eyes, from rolling down her colourless cheeks. But recovering herself she slightly answered his enquiries, and then expressed her hopes he had left his servant better.

“Much better, I thank you,” he returned; “And now will you not allow me to apologize to you for not returning again last night.”

“No indeed,” she replied, trying to smile, “I will not hear any apologies on

the subject ; I already know where you passed the night. But tell me, has the apothecary seen your servant a second time?"

"He has, and gives me every hope of his doing well, though he still requires care. I have left Mrs. Allet with him, and am now going to comply, though I confess much against my inclination, with my sister's wishes, and retire to bed."

Sophia looking up as he said this, observed he appeared excessively fatigued ; when losing all recollection of her late determination, her manner betrayed so much anxiety as she entreated him to follow Lady Grace's advice, that delighted with the interest it seemed to imply, Lord d'Arcy involuntarily seized her hand, but observing her confusion he almost immediately relinquished it, and requesting her to inform his sister he was about to follow

her injunctions, gracefully bowing, proceeded to his apartment.

Sophia found Charlotte so much exhausted by the gaieties of the preceding night, her own langour and want of spirits passed unnoticed by her, or were attributed solely to the same cause. As they were sitting at breakfast, Ellen looking alternately at her companions and perceiving in all the usual effects of late hours and hot rooms, sportively exclaimed.

“ Oh ! save me from the gaiety of those

“ Whose headaches nail them to a noon-day bed.”

They could none of them refrain from laughing ; but Charlotte told Ellen it did not become her to repeat those lines, who was equally implicated with themselves.

“ I acknowledge it,” she returned,
“ but are they not very applicable just now ? You, dying with the headache :

Lady Grace certainly not looking the better for her dissipation; and Sophia confessing not half an hour ago, she felt terribly nervous from the same cause."

"I never knew Sophia tired before," said Charlotte, "she was always as gay the morning after a ball, as at any other time. I begin to suspect the cause of our all feeling so much worse than usual, must arise from the saloon not having been properly ventilated: I never felt so tired before."

"Perhaps your spirits had never before been so highly elevated as they appeared last night;" observed Lady Grace smiling expressively.

"Charlotte certainly never had such an animating partner as Major Singleton at other balls," said Ellen archly.

“ If my head did not throb so much, I could retaliate most nobly upon you Ellen,” returned Charlotte, “ however I shall not forget I am in your debt. But what ails Sophia? She has not once opened her lips since her first salutation on entering.”

Sophia confessed she was very stupid, and saying she thought a walk would be of service, proposed to her sister and Lady Grace to take one with her. Charlotte, she would not press to accompany them thinking a little quiet the best restorative for her.

Lady Grace and Ellen agreeing with her, that a fine frosty morning might have a beneficial effect upon their relaxed frames, hastened to equip themselves to attend her. Harriet and Emily were invited to be of the party, but the latter alone felt any inclination to accept the offer.

In the hall they were met by Sir Charles, Mr. De Clairville and Major Singleton; the two former gentlemen offered to attend them, but the latter finding Charlotte was not of the party, excused himself from joining it.

Mr. De Clairville inquiring for Lord d'Arcy, his sister assigned the reason for his not being visible that morning: when after expressing his concern for the occasion of his absence, that gentleman delighted more than one of his auditors by the warm eulogium he passed on his Lordship. "I cannot forbear observing" he continued, "even before his sister, I never yet experienced so great a regard for any one out of my own immediate circle, as I entertain for him. Lord d'Arcy is in every respect so greatly superior to the present race of young men of rank, that I have sometimes wished to see him placed in an elevated station, where his virtues might be both seen and felt."

Lady Grace pressing the arm she held, assured her supporter he had found the direct road to her heart by expressing such admiration of her brother.

“If you my dear Sir,” she continued, “have already seen so much to love and admire in him, you will not wonder his sister should believe him possessed of every virtue under heaven.”

Mr. De Clairville delighted at remarking the affection that shone in the bright eyes of this sweet young woman, said, “ever may you, my dear Lady Grace, retain the same warmth of regard for each other, which is so gratifying to all our friends to observe.”

Sir Charles and Emily now approaching, interrupted a conversation so interesting to the trio. The former addressing himself to Sophia, said, “Emily has

been endeavouring to repeat some lines of her favorite bard, descriptive of the present scene, and thinks you can assist her memory."

"I believe I can guess what Emily alludes to," returned Sophia smiling, "are they not introduced in his Winter's walk at noon."

"They are," replied Emily, "and I wish my dear cousin if you are not too cold to slacken your pace a little, you would repeat them."

"Sophia cannot complain of cold," said Mr. De Clairville, "sheltered as we are by these woods."

Sophia acknowledging she had not that excuse to offer for not complying with Emily's wish, after a moment's thought began,

“ But now at noon,
“ Upon the southern side of the slant hills,
“ And where the woods fence off the northern blast,
“ The season smiles, resigning all its rage,
“ And has the warmth of May. The vault is blue
“ Without a cloud, and white without a speck
“ The dazzling splendour of the scene below.”

“ I would not willingly interrupt you, my dear Sophia,” cried her uncle, “ but it is impossible for me not to express my admiration of your favorite poet. What a faithful picture has he drawn of a winter’s morning, or rather noon. Emily was right, nothing can be more applicable than this description to the present scene. I have not read the Task since it first came out, but perfectly recollect the lines Sophia has just recited; and if I remember right, he goes on to describe his walk at this season in a wood, perhaps as extensive as the one we now are in.”

“ He does,” returned Sophia, “ after expressing the soothing effect of the bells from a neighbouring steepie.”

“ I remember them perfectly,” said Mr. De Clairville. “ Now go on to the lines describing a spot similar to the one we are now traversing.”

Sophia continued,

“ The walk, still verdant, under oaks and elms,
“ Whose outspread branches over-reach the glade.
“ The roof, though moveable through all its length
“ As the wind sways it, yet has well sufficed,
“ And, intercepting in their silent fall
“ The frequent flakes, has kept a path for me.
“ No noise is here, or none that hinders thought.
“ The red-breast warbles still, but is content
“ With slender notes, and more than half suppress;
“ Pleased with his solitude, and flitting light
“ From spray to spray, where'er he rests he shakes
“ From many a twig the pendent drops of ice,
“ That tinkle in the wither'd leaves below.
“ Stilness, accompanied with sounds so soft,
“ Charms more than silence. Meditation here
“ May think down hours to moments. Here the
 “ heart
“ May give an useful lesson to the head,
“ And Learning wiser grow without his book.”

Sir Charles affectionately pressed his niece's hand as she concluded, and thanked

her warmly for having afforded him so much gratification.

“My dear Sophia,” he continued, “how comes it that you who are of so lively and animated a disposition, should enter so much into this description of a winter scene ?

“Sophia, since her age of reason began,” said Mr. De Clairville “has been particularly attached to poetry: and the author of the lines you have just heard her recite, of all our modern poets ranks highest in her favor.”

“I confess myself,” she returned, “one of Cowper’s warmest admirers, he writes so much to the heart. Who that have lived all their life in the country, particularly those who are attached to it, but must in every line of this poet, find their own thoughts and feelings in similar scenes, accurately described?”

“ Do you prefer Cowper to Thompson?”
said Sir Charles.

“ Infinitely, though I greatly admire many parts of his Seasons. But if what we have heard be true, that this poet was not so alive to the beauties he describes, it may account for my not feeling the same glow of enthusiasm I experience when reading Cowper.”

“ You acknowledge yourself then a little prejudiced, my dear Sophia, against poor Thompson ? ”

“ Possibly I may ; but of this I am sure, I am not singular in my preference of the dear bard.”

“ Indeed you are not,” returned Lady Grace ; “ for Arthur I know thinks with you entirely ”

“ And is your brother as enthusiastic in

his admiration of Cowper?" said Sir Charles.

"Oh, quite as much," she replied: "and when Sophia was reciting just now, her voice brought to my recollection the sweetness of his."

Emily observed Sophia's colour rise at this remark; and fearing her confusion would be remarked, complained of cold, and requested them to take another turn in the wood at a brisker rate. The party willingly agreed to her request, and soon after, directed their steps homeward.

In the hall they were met by the Marquis of Ormondsty; who hearing they had been enjoying a most delightful morning, expressed his regret at not having been with them. "Instead of which" he continued, I have been bored to death by that princess of affection, Miss Warburton, who has an-

noyed me the whole morning by her unwished for attentions, and I was obliged to feign illness to escape from her."

"Poor Marquis!" said Sophia laughing; "how greatly you are to be pitied!"

"Indeed I am: and were you not kindly to take me with you to Melcombe, you would certainly have my death to answer for; as another week spent like this would kill me quite."

"I promise you, most noble cousin," Sophia replied, "a safe refuge at the Lodge for you shall have the tapestry chamber prepared for you; where no lady will venture to disturb your meditations, as it has been from time immemorial the privileged haunt of a certain race of gentry with large black bodies and short legs. Here you will be perfectly secure from your late or any other tormentor. I shall

only request, in return, when you do venture amongst us, you will not introduce any of your numerous companions to the other parts of the house."

"If you doom me to keep company with the knights of the web, do not expect when I appear before you, I will leave them behind me," returned the Marquis laughing. "Promise me therefore not to banish me where I can have no hope of seeing you, or take the consequence. I suspect" he continued in a lower tone, "you would not serve d'Arcy thus."

Sophia pretended not to hear this remark : she escaped a repetition of it by saying it was time to dress, and hastening to her own apartment, she continued there till the family had assembled in the drawing-room previous to dinner.

The first person that caught her view on

entering it, was Lord d'Arcy ; but affecting not to have observed him, she directed her steps to another part of the room, and taking up the first book that fell in her way, she appeared soon deeply interested in its contents. Lord d'Arcy was aware of her avoidance, and feared his unguarded manner the last evening, and in their interview this morning, had occasioned it.

Miserable at this supposition, and not daring to approach her, doubtful of the reception he should meet with, he appeared so absent, that Lady Grace observing something had disturbed him, sat watching him some time : till thoroughly uncomfortable she drew near and tenderly enquired if any thing was the matter. This question roused Lord d'Arcy from the reverie he had fallen into ; and endeavouring to smile at his sister's fears he assured her he had no excuse to make for his abstraction but stupidity.

“ If that is your complaint, my dear Arthur,” she returned, “ come with me and I will endeavour to find subjects to amuse you. Had you been with us some hours ago, you would have had a great treat in hearing Sophia recite a beautiful description of a winter scene from Cowper. I regret exceedingly, you were not of our walking party to day; as I know you would have been as much delighted as I was, in listening to her sweet tones, which I told her I had never heard equalled but by one; and that was yourself. Ah, what would I give to have such a sister.

“ Lord d’Arcy tenderly pressed the hand he held, and as he did so a sigh escaped him.

“ What still dull my brother? will not even Cowper animate you? Now let me try whether Sophia can: at least let us endeavour to learn what appears to

interest her so much. My dear friend," cried her Ladyship as she approached her, "we are very curious to discover the nature of those studies which have so deeply engaged your attention, that you have neither seen or heard any thing passing near you."

Sophia conscious she knew not the title of the volume she held in her hand, put it into her friend's without answering her question ; and Lady Grace glancing her eye over it, saw it was a poem of a popular author.

"Are you partial, Miss de Clairville, to this author's works?" said Lord d'Arcy, wishing to break silence.

Sophia hesitated, for her thoughts had wandered far from the poem.

"I am sure," cried Charlotte who now

approached, Sophia ought to be able to give her opinion of *this work* at least, as she has studied it in every possible light. Not ten minutes since I peeped over her shoulder as I passed, to discover what had so engaged her ; when lo ! the title of the work had, by a new manner of proceeding descended to the bottom of the page. Pray my dear friend," she continued with one of her archest looks, did the interest of the narrative receive any increase by reading it backwards ?

Sophia most terribly confused at this discovery, attempted to laugh, but observing Lord d'Arcy's eyes earnestly fixed upon her, she could bear her situation no longer, and saying she had not seen Mrs. Warburton that morning, rose from her seat with the intention of taking one near that Lady, but before she had reached her, she felt her hand taken by some one, and turning, perceived the Marquis at her side.

“ Will you,” he cried. “ allow me to sit by you at dinner to day ? ”

“ Certainly,” she replied laughing, “ if you particularly wish it. But may I enquire what is the cause of your honouring me thus ? ”

“ I might tell you,” he returned, “ it was solely to have the happiness of being near you ; but I know you would turn me into ridicule if I did. The real truth is, I want to escape from that eternal torment Eliza Warburton.”

“ And cannot you for another day put up with a little of the disagreeable, when you have so quietly borne it for the two last ? ”

“ I perceive how it is, *ma belle cousine* ; you are apprehensive of my occupying a seat you wish to reserve for another. I

will inform this noble Lord of the happiness that awaits him," and calling to Lord d'Arcy as he said this; Sophia dreading what would follow, pretended she had left her handkerchief in her room, and breaking from the Marquis made her escape just as his Lordship joined her tormenting cousin.

The company, many of them strangers to Sophia, were seated at table when she entered the dining-room. Not daring to raise her eyes, fearful of encountering those of the Marquis or Lord d'Arcy's, she advanced to the place usually occupied by Mr. Warburton, and entreated he would allow her to sit by him. "With pleasure my little Hebe," he replied, "if we can persuade one of these gentlemen to take the seat your noble relative has reserved for you."

“ I will allow of no manœuvering of the kind ;” cried the Marquis who, placed next to the lady of the house, had contrived to leave the chair on the other side of him vacant, “ Miss De Clairville promised before dinner to sit by me, and she shall not break her word.”

“ Shall not ! And do you my young friend allow his Lordship to use such peremptory language to you ?” enquired Mr. Warburton smiling.

Sophia laughing said, if he would make room for her beside him, she would soon shew that arbitrary gentleman she felt inclined to dispute his commands.

“ Come then my sweet sparkler,” said her friendly host ; “ I too much admire your noble spirit not to assist you.”

“ Revenge is my motto !” cried the

Marquis, archly glancing his eyes from Lord d'Arcy to Sophia.

Mr. Warburton enquired what that significant look implied; but perceiving the confusion his question had caused his fair neighbour, he good-naturedly refrained from increasing it by repeating it, or pressing for an answer, and she soon recovered from her embarrassment.

On the other side of Sophia sat a gentleman whose attention was so wholly taken up with the good things before him, as to appear totally unconscious of her vicinity.

She observed that he never took his eyes off his plate but for the purpose of ascertaining the next dish he should attack, and so fully intent was he on the important business he was engaged in, that he neither

saw nor heard any thing that was passing. When the cloth was removed and the dessert placed on the table, he for the first time noticed Sophia, and next to a good dinner he thought he had never seen a more attractive object. Sophia finding herself much annoyed by the unceremonious gaze of the stranger, now wished she had taken the seat by the Marquis; but Lord d'Arcy observing how uncomfortably she was situated, said, "You appear Miss De Clairville to suffer from the draft of that door; allow me to exchange seats with you."

Sophia grateful for his kind consideration, thanked him and was accepting his offer, when Charlotte laying her commands upon him not to stir, declared it would be a relief to her to remove from the torrid to the frozen zone; as the fire at her back was almost insupportable, Sophia's neighbour not feeling inclined to lose the object

of his pleasing contemplation, assured Miss Warburton she would not find it much cooler there, as the draft his Lordship talked of neither he nor Miss De Clairville felt. "At least," he added, "if I may judge by the warmth of colouring I see upon her cheek."

"Which certainly my dear Sir," cried the Marquis laughing, "proves my cousin has not been situated in the *neighbourhood* of the *frozen zone* at least."

The emphasis he laid upon the latter part of the sentence caused a smile upon the countenances of all who were in the vicinity of the gentleman he addressed. Sophia perfectly understood his meaning, and thinking it impossible she could change situations for the worse, preferred the risk of encountering the Marquis's raillery on removing to the seat next Lord d'Arcy, to continuing in her present one; and

pretending not to observe his significant signs, she took possession of the chair left her by Charlotte.

Lord d'Arcy delighted to find her again near him, was so different to the Lord d'Arcy he was a few minutes before, that Mrs. De Clairville was struck with the change, and suspicions of the cause for the first time entered her mind. From that instant she gave herself up to observation, and before the conclusion of the evening saw enough to convince her that her fears had not been without foundation.

On retiring for the night, she imparted them to her husband and the danger she saw of their Sophia's peace of mind being disturbed, if not irreparably injured by the attentions of so fascinating a man as Lord d'Arcy, whom she had heard that morning from his sister was the destined husband of another.

“ Surely my love,” returned Mr. De Clairville, “ you are premature in forming such a conclusion. Consider how short the time is since our dear girl first saw this man, to whom you already appear to apprehend she has given her heart,”

Mrs. De Clairville shook her head. “ On every other subject, I yield to your judgment, fully aware how much superior it is to my own. But in this, your sex in general are not so keen-sighted as ours. I see you smile, but hear me ; Sophia it is true, has not till lately been in company with this elegant young man ; but she has felt acquainted with him for months, for you may recollect that Matilda in her last visit to us, made him the continued theme of her discourse. Slow in imbibing attachments, but enthusiastic when she has formed them, her friends or her husband, for they are the same, are exalted by her to the highest pinnacle of human excellence.

The consequence is, Sophia in listening to the constant praises of this young nobleman from her sister, learnt to love his many virtues long before she saw him, and when he did appear, felt as if she had known him all her life. I do not blame her so much for listening to this fascinating young man, as I do him for endeavouring to win the affections of an amiable young woman at the time he is conscious of being under engagements to another."

"If," said Mr. De Clairville, "his heart is averse to the connection his family are anxious he should form, I pity him from my heart; but I shall feel greatly displeased, if knowing his own situation, he should be acting in the manner you describe. But are you my dear Matilda, quite certain he is engaged to Lady Lucretia?"

"Too certain, I fear;" she replied.

“ Had it been otherwise, what I now so much deplore would have been considered by me the most desirable event that could have occurred: for where can we find a mind more congenial to our beloved child’s?”

“ Let us not act hastily in this business,” said Mr. De Clairville, Lord d’Arcey accompanies us back to Melcombe, and there we shall have opportunities to observe him more narrowly. Should he continue those attentions to Sophia, which have so much alarmed you, it will then be in our power to give her a caution not to encourage them; but if she at present feels only that preference for him, it is natural she should do for an estimable character, we may rather injure the cause, than benefit her by hinting our fears on the subject. You can take an opportunity of mentioning before her the supposed en-

gagement of Lord d'Arcy: and I know my Sophia too well not to feel confident she will shrink from encouraging any tender sentiment for one so situated."

Mrs. De Clairville feeling more satisfied since she had relieved her mind by opening it to her husband, promised in this she would be directed by him, feeling convinced he would watch over the happiness of their beloved child with the same anxious care as she herself could do.

CHAP. XI.



At the end of the week the Melcombe family with their guests returned home, after pressing the party at Ashmore to spend a few days with them at the Lodge during Mr. and Mrs. Howard's visit there, Major Singleton and his father were particularly included in this invitation, nor was the general favorite, the good Mrs. Stapleton omitted. Charlotte promised for them all, and assured her friends she would certainly carry the whole party over for a couple of days at least, when the

arrival of Mr. and Mrs Howard was announced to her.

Mr. Leigh would not allow any one but himself to attend Emily to the carriage. He sighed deeply as he relinquished her hand, and his sigh was echoed, not from the fair object of his idolatry, but from Charlotte who standing on the steps of the portico, could not resist imitating that and the long face he thought proper to assume on the occasion.

The De Clairvilles took a friendly leave of Clement with whom George was to pass a little time in Town before he returned to Eaton. The spirits of the latter were a little depressed at parting from his family ; but the hope of finding amusement on the road from Mr. Leigh's absurdities, (for he was to be of the party to London,) in some measure reconciled him to the separation.

The De Clairvilles arrived at Melcombe some hours before dinner, and the intermediate time was devoted by the young ladies to putting their friend in possession of the apartment prepared for her and in introducing her to their own; one of which was a room fitted up for them by Mr. De Clairville, with every thing conducive to their comfort and amusement. Harriet, who was fond of flowers, was permitted to indulge her taste for them by presiding in the green-house and conservatory; and this her favorite retreat was always adorned with some of their choicest productions.

Lady Grace was delighted with this little *sanctum*, as she called it; which the gardener had that morning contributed to embellish, by sending in a fresh supply of most beautiful and fragrant plants in flower.

Mr. De Clairville found on his return home, a letter from his son-in-law, in which he expressed his and his wife's regret that it would not be in their power to visit Melcombe at the time they were expected. After mentioning the cause that must necessarily detain them in town, so much longer than they had hoped there would have been occasion for, Mr. Howard thus continued, " You will see Alfred at the end of another fortnight, even should we not be able to escape from London ; as his anxiety to be with Harriet will not allow him to wait beyond that time for us. She has had a narrow escape of losing him : his regiment was ordered abroad, but has since been countermanded. Matilda has joined her persuasions to mine to induce him now there is some prospect of peace, to lay aside his red coat : but in vain. I hope Harriet will be more successful. My wife, considering her situation, is wonderfully well ; and Charles grows a fine fellow.

He is reckoning much of his visit to Melcombe, and seeing his dear little aunt Sophy again, who is, you are aware, his first favorite, next to her, his grandpapa and grandmamma rank highest in his favor. I am desired to enquire whether you have met Lord d'Arcy yet. If my dear mother sees him with the eyes of her daughter, you are probably inclined to feel as jealous of this young nobleman as myself. Had Harriet not been disposed of, I should have wished to have seen her the choice of my friend. Ellen is too serious for him, and Sophia too lively, I suspect. Whoever he marries will be a fortunate woman ; and when you know him you will agree with me in thinking so. Matilda desires me to send loves and kisses to be distributed by you in the greatest abundance, &c. &c."

A fortnight glided so rapidly away it, appeared to Lord d'Arcy and his sister scarcely a day. The mornings of this hap-

py party were generally passed in the *sanctum* in reading, drawing, or working; or without doors in riding or walking. The evenings were devoted to music and dancing. Lord d'Arcy had prevailed upon Sophia not merely to sing to him but with him. The more he saw her the more attractive she appeared. She was his constant partner in the dance, and he attended her in their morning excursions. Every day produced new pleasures, and a separation from so fascinating a being, was an idea too painful to be dwelt upon for a moment: and he hastened to chase it from his mind, whenever it came across it.

A few evenings before that, the Deresfords were expected to return to the Priory, which was to be the signal for Lord d'Arcy and his sister to leave the Lodge, Ellen and Lady Grace after singing several duetts, prevailed upon Emily to take a part in a favorite glee of Mr. De Clairville's. Sophia

at the moment this was proposed, was not present, but returning soon after, to avoid interrupting the performance, she remained stationary just within the door she had entered at. So entirely were her senses engrossed in listening to the music, she heard not a hasty step advancing from the hall ; the door at which she was standing, was the next moment opened with great precipitation, and Sophia was with violence thrown to the ground. Lord d'Arcy, whose eyes had been attracted to that part of the room for the last ten minutes, saw her fall and flew to raise her : when perceiving the blood trickle from a wound she had received, by her temple coming in contact with the edge of a chair and that she was insensible, his whole frame shook so violently it was with difficulty he could support his lovely burthen. Mr. De Clairville and his eldest son, (for the intruder proved to be Edward,) would have relieved him from it ; but he would not

allow them, and continued to support her whilst Mrs. De Clairville and her daughters endeavoured to stop the effusion of blood which continued to flow from her temple. Lord d'Arcy all this time, remained gazing on her pale and inanimate countenance ; his own, so expressive of anguish, that had not Mr. De Clairville already suspected the state of his heart he could no longer have remained in ignorance of it.

He was on the point of entreating him to leave the room, when Sophia opened her eyes : the first object they rested upon was Lord d'Arcy. The expression in his, which instantaneously changed from the deepest despair, to delight the most uncontrollable, told a tale she could not misunderstand.

Much agitated, she gently extricated herself from his supporting arms, and hiding her face in the bosom of her mother, she burst into tears.

Mrs. De Clairville now requested all would leave the room except Harriet, whom she detained to assist in removing the dear sufferer to her chamber. Sophia's tears soon relieved her, and she requested to be informed of what had happened to her, but her mother did not think proper to mention Edward's arrival to her that night; and merely saying the abrupt entrance of some one had occasioned her to fall, recommended her going to bed immediately; and Sophia experiencing great pain in her head, readily consented to follow this advice.

Lord d'Arcy the moment he left the room, ordered a horse to be saddled with all speed; and thinking he could ride faster than any one else, was on his road to the next town before he was missed. Happily he met Mr. Unwin about a mile from the house, who had been visiting a gentleman in the neighbourhood, and was returning to C——. So entirely was Lord d'Arcy

engrossed by Sophia's danger, he would have passed the surgeon without seeing him: but fortunately Mr. Unwin was not in love, and as it was bright moonlight, he discerned and hailed his Lordship, who, rejoiced at the meeting, entreated him to return with him immediately to Melcombe, and examine the wound in Miss De Clairville's temple. Mr. Unwin readily complied, though he was not in the habit of attending the family. On their arrival at the Lodge, Lord d'Arcy introduced his companion to Mr. De Clairville; and on examining Sophia's wound, he found it so very inconsiderable, that after dressing it, and ordering his patient a little restorative, the worthy surgeon assured her mother and the rest of the family, she would be quite well the next day. What a relief was this to poor Edward; who had been apprehensive he had by his precipitance occasioned a dangerous blow to a sister he so much loved.

Mr. Unwin was dismissed with a hand-

some fee, accompanied with the grateful thanks of the now happy family, for his kindness in turning back with Lord d'Arcy at the first wish expressed by him.

Mr. De Clairville introduced Lord d'Arcy and Edward to each other : and the latter accounted for his unexpected appearance by saying he had received a letter from Sophia, that ought to have reached him some time before ; in which she mentioned the hopes his family entertained of soon seeing his brother and sister Howard. This induced him to return directly to Melcombe, instead of proceeding to London as had been his original intention.

The Marquis and Sir Charles who had been playing at billiards and knew nothing of what had passed, now entered, Sir Charles particularly attached to his nephew, met him with open arms, the Marquis shook hands with him, and expressed in animated

terms, the pleasure his return to Melcombe occasioned him.

The gentlemen were now made acquainted with the accident that had happened to Sophia. The Marquis enquired whether a surgeon had been sent for ; when Lady Grace assured him that was not forgotten, and mentioned her brother's having met so opportunely with Mr. Unwin as he was going in quest of one.

“ I ought to entreat Lord d'Arcy's pardon,” returned the Marquis, “ for having suspected him of loosing sight for one moment only, of that presence of mind which always distinguishes him, on any emergency. But on this occasion, I confess ” he continued directing an arch glance towards him, “ I did not expect it would have remained with him.”

“ Indeed you were mistaken,” said Ellen

very seriously, "Lord d'Arcy had flown to my poor sister's assistance before any of us were aware of the accident. He looked terribly frightened though," she added in a whisper, "for his face was as pale as hers."

The Marquis unable to resist laughing, said, "Indeed my fair cousin I believe you; and between ourselves, I do not think his gallant Lordship has yet recovered his fine colour."

Lord d'Arcy saw by the expression in Lord Ormondsty's countenance, that he suspected it was more than common humanity that had dictated the necessity of procuring immediate assistance for Sophia. Mr. De Clairville, he doubted not, had his suspicions also: and he determined before he parted from him, that night, to open his heart to this estimable man. For this purpose he waited with some

anxiety for Sir Charles and Ormondsty to retire : but they appeared determined to put his patience to some trial, as after the ladies retired they drew their chairs nearer the fire and were soon engaged in an argument they had often before discussed, which interested so much, neither thought of separating.

At length Mr. De Clairville looking at his watch, said, “ I know not, my friends, how you may feel, but I confess I am very sleepy ; therefore with your good leave, I shall say good-night ; ” and taking a candle from the side-board he left the room. Lord d’Arcy instantly followed, and overtaking him as he was entering the library, entreated he would allow him a few minutes conversation before he retired to bed.

Mr. De Clairville observing his young friend’s agitation, instantly guessed the subject he wished to discuss, and smilingly

consented to be detained from his rest for so short a time.

Lord d'Arcy then explained to him his father's wishes to see him soon settled, and mentioned the lady he had destined for his wife ; whom, though he felt the highest esteem for, he could never love ; in short, that until he had known Sophia, he had not seen the woman to whom he could yield his whole heart.

“ I should not, my dear sir,” he continued, “ have been thus premature in opening my heart to the father, before I had ascertained whether any hope existed of my attentions being well received by the daughter, had not the occurrence of this evening, when I feared your Sophia's life was in danger, made you at once master of my secret, and rendered it necessary for me to explain myself. I know,” he

eagerly continued, seeing Mr. De Clairville was going to interrupt him, “ I must not yet speak on this subject to your daughter. I only entreat, my dear sir, you will allow of my continuing to see and converse with her; and should I fail of making that impression on her heart, I so anxiously desire, I will then endeavour to banish all selfish regrets, and learn to love her with the disinterested affection of a brother.”

“ Will you now allow me, my dear Lord d’Arcy,” returned Mr. De Clairville smiling, “ to say a few words in answer to this lover-like speech?” then seeing his young friend anxiously regarding him, he continued, “ Believe me I know of no man with whom I would sooner entrust a daughter’s happiness than yourself. Before we met, I had learned to value you; and I feel not less inclined to esteem you since we have become personally acquainted.

But, my dear Lord d'Arcy, I know your father; he will be averse to your forming a connection in my family, or in any other whose rank is not equal to his own. So well aware as I am of this, I should be highly culpable were I to encourage an attachment which would be a source of misery to both parties. Let me entreat you therefore, till you have the full sanction of your family, not to continue those attentions to my daughter you have hitherto shown her. I think I know you too well to believe it would be any gratification to you to find an amiable young woman attached to you, when there was no prospect of that attachment proving a happy one."

Lord d'Arcy took the hand of Mr. De Clairville, and pressing it between his own, said, " You do indeed know me, if you think me incapable of feeling happiness

at the expence of a beloved object. But will you, my dear sir, promise to give into my keeping , such a treasure as your Sophia, if my father is willing to relinquish his idle prejudices in favour of rank? Give me but this assurance, and I will return to him immediately, nor see Melcombe again, till I have not only his sanction for my paying my addresses to Miss De Clairville, but his warmest approbation of the daughter-in-law I would present to him."

" I wish not to part from you so soon," returned Mr. De Clairville, " but perhaps as things are at present situated, it is better you should leave us. Whatever success you may meet with in your application to Lord Montreuil, you will continue to retain that place in my regard you at present possess."

Lord d'Arcy felt too much to be very eloquent, but his expressive countenance

said all for him he could possibly have wished.

Some further conversation passed on the subject before they separated. It was agreed Lord d'Arcy should account to his sister for his return to Town, in some way that would satisfy her mind without alarming her. Lady Grace was to continue at Melcombe till her brother came for her; but if that was impossible, she was to accompany the Deresfords in their return to the Metropolis.

Mr. De Clairville obtained permission of Lord d'Arcy to impart the subject of their conference to his wife, who was much affected when she was made acquainted with it.

“Noble young man!” she exclaimed, “how is it possible my dear child can avoid loving so much perfection! How ardent-

ly do I hope he may not be sacrificed to the ambition of his parent."

"I hope it equally with you, my dear Matilda," returned her husband, "yet trust, should we find the Earl's prejudices not likely to be shaken, our dear child's happiness by the timely retreat of this estimable young man, will not be materially injured. We must endeavour by amusing her mind, to banish any impression that may already have been made on it; and for this purpose, I shall be an advocate for her returning into Hampshire with your brother and Emily, as nothing there will remind her of him, whom it will then be her interest to forget; whilst here every thing around her would but too often recal him to her recollection."

"When does he think of leaving us?" enquired Mrs. De Clairville.

“The next day but one,” returned Mr. De Clairville; “But it is time now to think of retiring; to-morrow we will resume the subject.”

CHAP. XII.



Sophia felt so well on awaking the next morning, that she arose at the same time Ellen did, with the intention of joining the family at breakfast as usual.

She had the preceding evening become acquainted with the arrival of her eldest brother, and now learned that he had been the innocent cause of her fall.

Before they joined the party below, Edward was admitted to her dressing-room,

and alone permitted to tie on the bandage Mr. Unwin had ordered to be retained for a few days. Delighted at again seeing this beloved brother, Sophia's spirits rose in proportion; and as she entered the breakfast parlour leaning on his arm, her beautiful eyes sparkling with more than usual brilliancy, she appeared to Lord d'Arcy the most interesting figure he had ever beheld; and when he enquired after her health, it was with a tone and manner so different from even her affectionate family, that Sophia could not avoid observing it; and blushing deeply she returned her acknowledgments to him for the trouble he had taken the evening before, in going in quest of a surgeon.

The Marquis interrupted the reply of Lord d'Arcy, which by the animated look that preceded it, promised to be no less so, by enquiring of Sophia whether she as-

sumed the bandage of the blind god to put poor mortals on their guard, and to shew that they could not approach her with impunity."

Lady Grace laughing, said he appeared by the awful distance he preserved, to be in serious alarm of receiving a wound from the bright eyes of her friend, who she desired him to observe had taken great care to place her bandage so that the sparkling orbs were not concealed by it.

"It is Edward," cried Ellen, "to whom Sophia is indebted for the becoming manner in which it is disposed: as she gave him permission to arrange it as he thought best."

"Come my little Cupid," cried Sir Charles, "and sit by me. I at least, am in no danger from your vicinity."

Sophia grateful for this invitation, seated herself next her uncle; but her incorrigible cousin would not suffer her even under his protection, to escape; and drawing near, he whispered something in her ear which Harriet observing, caused a blush of the deepest dye on her cheek, said, "You must indeed my dear Sophia assist us in keeping this Marquis in some order; he has been attacking us all in turn this morning."

"I greatly fear he is incorrigible," she returned: "but we will try what it is possible to do with him during the month he is to be at Melcombe."

"It will be your own fault, beauteous nymphs," he cried, "if I am not, long before that period elapses, the willing slave of one of you. I hinted as much to Sophia some time since, but she would not attend to me."

Sophia laughed ; but the blush that accompanied it, plainly intimated, she, at least, understood what her noble relative alluded to.

In fact, Lord Ormondsty would at one time willingly have laid his marquisate at the feet of his fair cousin ; but on the first hint of the subject, Sophia had decidedly rejected it. He left Melcombe soon after and when he again met her, which was at Ashmore, he perceived a powerful rival had appeared in Lord d'Arcy, to whose attentions she did not appear quite so insensible as she had done to his.

Sophia felt the regard of a relative for the Marquis of Ormondsty, and finding him now willing to consider her in that light, she met his advances with pleasure ; and happily her cousin did not suffer materially from his disappointment. His heart had only been slightly touched ; it was destined

to feel an attachment more ardent than that he once fancied he experienced for Sophia.

The butler now entered with the letter-bag, and Lady Grace perceiving two for Lord d'Arcy, enquired if either were from her father.

With as firm a voice as he could assume, he replied that one of them was; and as soon as he could summons sufficient resolution, he turned to Mr. De Clairville, and apologized to him for the necessity he was under of returning to Town immediately, instead of remaining as he had hoped, in this hospitable mansion for another week.

Lady Grace in great alarm, interrupted the answer Mr. De Clairville was going to return her brother, by entreating to learn the occasion of his sudden recal.

Lord d'Arcy soon quieted her apprehensions ; assuring her all were well at home, and that it was indispensable business alone that called him away.

As he said this, he involuntarily looked towards Sophia, and saw her almost as much agitated as himself. His emotion now became so powerful, that fearing it would be observed, he excused himself on the plea of returning answers to his letters by the post ; and anxious to be alone, he left the room, that he might in privacy and free from the observation of all, indulge the delightful hope that he was not wholly indifferent to Sophia. What would he not have given to have heard this hope confirmed by herself. One moment he felt determined to come to an immediate explanation with this beloved object ; but with the next, recurred the promise her father had obtained from him of not mentioning the subject to her until he had obtained the Earl's consent.

Unable to write, or think of any thing but Sophia, Lord d'Arcy was found by Mr De Clairville, pacing the Library in such evident discomposure, that fearful he had received some unpleasant tidings in the letters he had been reading, he hinted his apprehensions on the subject. Lord d'Arcy immediately relieved his uneasiness on that account, and blushing for the situation he had been found in, endeavoured to recover himself ; and succeeded so well, that when his sister requested to see him for a few minutes, he was able to appear before her with so calm a countenance, that Lady Grace could no longer entertain a suspicion of any thing being wrong at home.

Sophia's agitation had not escaped the notice of any one ; but not even the Marquis commented upon it : and as soon as breakfast was over, she made her escape from the room, and hastening to her own, gave

way to a violent burst of tears, which in some measure relieved the oppression she had felt at her heart for the last half hour.

Could it be possible she had given her affections to Lord d'Arcy ; to one, who it was evident, thought not of her ? It was true she had not given them unsought. Lord d'Arcy's eyes had not been silent, if his voice had : in those, every time they met hers, she had read a language it was scarcely possible to misunderstand. " At least," thought Sophia, " I deceived myself into believing this ; for had it indeed been true, would he leave Melcombe without entering into some explanation ?"

Determined not to allow him for an instant, to suppose she felt any attachment for one who evidently thought not of her longer than the present hour, Sophia dried her eyes, and wishing to give as little time to reflection as possible, she

opened her *porte feuille* and drew forth a piece she had begun some time before, with the intention of working at it all the morning. But on taking up her pencil, she was mortified to find her head would not allow of her doing any thing of the kind. Obligated to relinquish her design, yet resolved upon employing herself in some way, recollecting her sisters and Lady Grace with the gentlemen had decided upon riding to the seat of Lord G—, and that Lord d'Arcy was certainly engaged in answering his letters in the Library, Sophia ventured to proceed to the music-room, which was at some distance from that apartment.

She struck a few chords on Ellen's harp which were in unison with her feelings. A book of her sister's songs laid on the desk ; Sophia drew the instrument to her, and began playing the air of the one before her. It was Atwood's "Adieu." She had

often rallied her sister upon its being a particular favorite with her, but had never till this morning, attempted singing it herself. She had finished the recitative and was proceeding to the air, when fancying she heard a step advancing, she started from her seat, and was hastily leaving the room by another door, but believing she had been mistaken, as no one appeared, she again ventured to return to the instrument, and charmed as every one must be with that beautiful composition, she continued to sing it throughout.

Sophia's voice was naturally very sweet; and had it been cultivated as highly as Ellen's, it would have rivalled if not excelled hers. Much soothed by her employment, she remained some time longer at the harp; and after trying several songs, she turned again to the first she had been singing, and at length closing the book, she repeated aloud almost unconsciously, whilst

a sigh escaped her, "Ah would we had never met!" and rising the next moment, her eye rested on the figure of Lord d'Arcy who had entered the room some time before; but fearing to interrupt the sweetest tones that had ever struck his ear, scarcely allowed himself to breathe, lest he should dissolve the enchantment.

Sophia on perceiving him, started and coloured violently; but endeavouring to recover herself, hastily enquired whether he had seen her sisters or Lady Grace.

Lord d'Arcy appeared not to hear the question addressed to him; as advancing nearer, he requested once more to hear that beautifully affecting song.

Sophia recollecting how much reason she had to feel displeased with him, and in no humour to comply with this request, said hastily, "Indeed my Lord you must

excuse me," and at the same moment attempted to pass him, but he prevented her, and taking her unwilling hand, entreated to know how he had been so unfortunate as to offend her, which her altered manner too plainly told him he had done.

Sophia vainly endeavoured to assure him he was mistaken, and again tried to leave the room. Lord d'Arcy now in the most earnest manner entreated her not to quit him without explaining the cause of her displeasure. Seeing her change colour, and feeling the hand he yet retained, tremble in his grasp, his own agitation became equally powerful, and thrown entirely off his guard by the sight of her increasing emotion, which he dared not account for as he wished, upon Sophia requesting him to release her hand and let her pass, he cried "I cannot, indeed I cannot allow you to leave me thus! Ah Sophia! you who are all gentleness, all compassion to

others, can you not feel a little for a man who is at this time under sentence of banishment from all that is dearest to him on earth? And should I add, it is your father who has decreed this severe punishment, would you then, my sweet friend, grant me your pity?"

"You speak in enigmas my Lord," she returned; "excuse me, but my head is not equal this morning to solving them;" and Sophia passed her disengaged hand across her forehead, and by so doing displaced the bandage that had covered the wound in her temple, which now caught the eye of Lord d'Arcy bleeding afresh.

In great alarm, he tore off the silk handkerchief, she had on leaving her room thrown round her neck, and as he carefully tied it across the forehead of Sophia, his hand trembled so exceedingly, it was with some difficulty he fastened the knot which

secured it : then seeing she was unable to support herself, he gently threw his arm around her agitated form, and in a voice that expressed his emotion, entreated her to remain where she was, till the faintness she so evidently suffered from, had left her. But feeling every moment more unwilling to be detained, Sophia gently extricating herself from his support, assured him she now felt perfectly relieved from it, and again attempted to move towards the door : when perceiving her intention, he besought her so earnestly not to leave him in the cruel uncertainty he was then suffering, that involuntarily she paused, though the next instant she quickened her steps, and reaching the door was about to open it ; when Lord d'Arcy following, prevented her ; and seizing her hand as it rested upon the lock, so ably pleaded his cause, that Sophia found herself listening to an avowal of his attachment, before she was aware : nor did her recollection entirely return, till

the secret of his heart was discovered to her, and she had been betrayed into an acknowledgment of her own.

Lord d'Arcy mentioned to her the conversation he had had with her father the preceding evening.

“ I shall scarcely have courage,” he continued, “ to confess to him, how very ill I have complied with his injunctions. You, my beloved Sophia,” he added, looking tenderly at her, “ must plead my excuse.”

“ What,” she returned, deeply blushing, as her eyes fell beneath his expressive ones, “ do you my Lord commit an error, and then feel afraid to acknowledge it ?”

“ In this instance I certainly do,” he replied ; “ as next to a frown from yourself, I dread encountering one from your respected father.”

“Be not so much in awe of him,” returned Sophia, “I know him too well to believe he will retain his anger long, when he hears how involuntarily the offence was committed.”

Lord d’Arcy delighted to observe her former animated smiles in some measure returning, again took the hand she had just withdrawn, and raising it to his lips, said, in a tone expressive of his feelings, “My sensations are of too exquisite a nature for a real penitent to experience. I cannot plead for mercy on that score; as the events of the last hour have rendered me too happy to suffer any share of repentance for my transgression, to intrude.”

Hours now flew as minutes, and the ringing of the first dinner bell at length reminded Sophia of the time she had spent in the music-room. Starting from her seat, her exclamation at the lateness of the hour,

gave a thrill of the most exquisite delight to her lover, who could only express his gratitude by bestowing repeated kisses on the hand he had been so long permitted to retain. At length disengaging it, Sophia hastened to her apartment ; congratulating herself on having reached it without meeting either her sisters or cousin ; and throwing herself into a chair, for some time gave way to her feelings, which she gratefully acknowledged were of a very different description to those she had left her room with.

The voices of Lady Grace and Emily approaching, made her recollect where she was, and when they entered and enquired in their usual affectionate manner how she felt herself, Sophia was able to answer them in a calm yet cheerful tone. She had before their entrance, taken off the handkerchief Lord d'Arcy had bound round her.

head, and deposited it safely in a drawer : and producing another she requested the assistance of Harriet, who then made her appearance, in tying it on : and desired to hear how they had been amused with their visit to Lord G—'s fine house and grounds, she was entertained with the history of the morning, which Lady Grace declared was one of the pleasantest she had ever passed.

“ I cannot think,” she continued, “ where Arthur can have hidden himself all the morning. On my return I sought him in his room, and not finding him there, enquired of Roberts where he was. He could give me no information, except that he had not left the house on horseback, as he had not many minutes before, seen his favorite courser in the stable: and Mr. and Mrs. De Clairville are equally ignorant on the subject.”

Sophia expecting to hear herself the

next called upon to give some account of the truant, affected to be deeply engaged in searching for her necklace which she wanted to complete her toilet: but happily Lady Grace, as she was turning to her to enquire if by any chance she had encountered her brother, saw him through the window approaching the house, and exclaiming “there he is,” ran down to speak to him, before she threw off her habit.

The last dinner bell had rung some time before the equestrians were prepared to attend its summons; and Sophia feeling an unusual disinclination to be the first in the drawing-room, busied herself in assisting her sisters to dress.

On entering it with them, she met the eye of Lord d’Arcy, who was in an instant by her side; and before they repaired to the dining-room, he mentioned his unsuc-

cessful search for her father since he had parted from her; but assured her he intended seeking the earliest opportunity after the meal was concluded, to make his confession to him.

Mr. De Clairville entered soon after : and when dinner was over and the ladies had retired, his Lordship hinted his wish for a private audience, which was instantly granted him.

Mr. De Clairville, after hearing what had passed that morning in the music room, which Lord d'Arcy acknowledged had been occasioned partly by thinking Sophia was offended with him, but more by that impetuosity of character, which he feared he should never entirely overcome, contented himself with pointing out the misery such precipitancy would cause the beloved object, if, as was most probable, the Earl should prove inexorable to his wish of calling her his.

“Do not, my dear Sir, believe such a thing possible,” hastily interrupted Lord d’Arcy. “Is there a family that would not think it an honour to be connected with yours. Why then should mine alone be averse to it?”

Mr. De Clairville shook his head, “Your wishes my dear young friend, induce you to buoy up yourself with hopes which I too plainly foresee, will soon be crushed.”

“My father cannot be so inhuman as you evidently think him,” returned Lord d’Arcy warmly. “If he should prove himself so, I see no reason I am to sacrifice my every hope of happiness to his illiberal prejudices.”

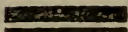
“Let us my Lord, understand each other :” cried Mr. De Clairville. “Should Lord Montreuil, as I predict, be averse to

your forming a connection with my daughter, never with my consent shall that daughter become your wife. Do not be hurt with this determination, " he continued, seeing Lord d'Arcy much agitated. " I shall ever entertain the same warm regard for you I experience at this moment : but put the case to yourself : could you bear to see your sister enter any family who would look down upon her with indifference ?"

" I feel you are right, my dear Sir," returned Lord d'Arcy, as he affectionately pressed the hand that was held out to him ; and that all my hopes must rest with my father."

'They now separated ; Mr. De Clairville to seek his wife, and Lord d'Arcy to find Sophia.

CHAP. XIII.



Mr. De Clairville on entering his Matilda's dressing-room, saw by her emotion, she had not now to learn the occurrence of the morning.

Sophia had but just left her; for eager to vindicate Lord d'Arcy, she had sought an opportunity after they left the dressing-room, of relating to her mother the scene that had passed in the morning.

“ Be angry therefore my dear mother,

with your Sophia," she continued, " rather than with Lord d'Arcy, for allowing her feelings so much to overcome her; for had not this been the case I should not now have to become a suppliant for one, who, thrown off his guard in consequence of my folly has perhaps, forfeited the esteem of those he so much venerates and loves."

Mrs. De Clairville, aware what had passed could not be recalled, now endeavoured to prepare her daughter for the probable ill success of the young Lord's intended application to his father. But Sophia would not allow herself for an instant to dwell on so terrible an idea. She thought it impossible Lord d'Arcy's influence could be exerted in vain; and whilst she listened to her mother, as she dwelt upon the known prejudices of the Earl, hope still whispered they would be set aside in this instance.

Mrs. De Clairville saw the fallacy of these expectations ; and her fears arose in proportion as the prospect of her child's unhappiness, when she found how delusive they were, presented itself to her view.

Mr. De Clairville related what had just passed between himself and Lord d'Arcy on the subject.

“ He is at present,” he continued, “ too happy in finding Sophia's affections his to allow any fears of the future to enter his mind. I am sorry we were not more upon our guard this morning, then our sweet girl might have been spared a part of those trials which I now see no chance of her escaping.

“ I have already been very angry with myself,” said Mrs. De Clairville, “ for

losing sight of her till his Lordship had left Melcombe ; but I confess I felt too much reliance upon his prudence to doubt him for one instant."

" I was as much disappointed as you could be," returned her husband ; " but there was such a noble ingenuousness in his manner when acknowledging his error, that I felt it impossible to retain my anger long."

Mr. De Clairville then added, he should make it his request both to Lord d'Arcy and his daughter, that what had passed that morning, should not be divulged to the rest of the family ; as any hope of a favorable issue to the intended application to the Earl was not to be dwelt upon for a moment.

" How mortifying it is," cried Mrs. De Clairville in a tone, that shewed how much

she felt it, “ that a daughter of ours should have fixed her affections upon the only man whose family would not think it an honour to be allied to the De Clairvilles.”

“ Say rather my love,” returned her gratified husband, “ to the daughter of so exemplary a wife and mother as yourself.”

Mrs. De Clairville, too much affected to reply, only returned her idolized husband’s tender embrace as he pressed her to his heart.

A summons to tea broke in upon this interesting tête-a-tête, after which Mr. De Clairville had another interview with Lord d’Arcy ; when he strongly pointed out to him the necessity there was for his immediate departure, that his daughter might not be kept for a moment unnecessarily in suspense.

Lord d’Arcy wished to delay his return.

to Town another day, but Mr. De Clairville was peremptory. He then requested to be allowed to see Sophia for a few minutes alone, and after a little hesitation his request was granted.

In her company every apprehension, for the success of his application to his father, vanished; and forgetful of time, had not Mr. De Clairville reminded them of it, neither Lord d'Arcy nor his companion would have thought of separating.

“ Shall I not see you in the morning?” exclaimed the former, as Sophia attempted to leave him.

“ No,” returned her father; “ I must entreat you will let this be your last interview. You will feel equal reluctance at bidding her farewell after another. Sophia my love,” he continued, “ your mother wishes to see you before you

retire for the night ; remember it is now late."

Sophia would have followed her father, but Lord d'Arcy entreating her to remain one minute longer, she suffered herself to be detained ; but finding he had nothing more to say than what he had for the last two hours repeated again and again, she reminded him it was time to separate ; yet not till he had again drawn from her the confession he had heard with such rapture in the morning, was she permitted to depart ; and once more declaring nothing, not even his father should part them, he rejoined Mr. De Clairville in the library, as Sophia made the best of her way to the apartment of her mother, on whose bosom she hid her blushing face, as she poured forth to that sympathising friend all her hopes and fears.

Mrs. De Clairville sighed as she saw in

perspective, the many days of sorrow in store for this beloved child ; whose susceptibility she now deeply deplored. Blessing her most affectionately, she dismissed her to bed, after obtaining from her a promise of not appearing below the next morning, until Lord d'Arcy had left the house.

* * * * *

Sleepless passed this night with Sophia ; it was perhaps the last she might ever pass under the same roof with Lord d'Arcy. He had bade farewell to his sister and Mr. De Clairville over night, leaving his farewell compliments to the rest of the family through them ; as it was his intention, when he found he should not see Sophia again, to leave Melcombe at an early hour the following day.

When Ellen rose, she perceived by her sister's countenance that something was wrong, and fearing her fall might prove of

more serious consequence, then was first apprehended, she hastened to her mother's apartment, and gently intimated her fears. Mrs. De Clairville immediately returned with her, but on entering the room had the pleasure of finding Sophia had fallen asleep, and recommending to Ellen to follow her, she descended to the breakfast room, thinking the former would rest better when left to herself, than with even her attentive and watchful sister beside her.

Lady Grace was rallied by the Marquis on her loss of appetite that morning.

“What a happy fellow is d’Arcy,” he added, “to take with him so many hearts. My three cousins I know are inconsolable. Sophia, I find, is not able to make her appearance below this morning.”

“Sophia is suffering more from her accident, I doubt,” said Sir Charles, “than

from the absence of his Lordship. She looked, I thought, very ill last night. Have you seen her, sister, to day ? ”

Mrs De Clairville answered in the affirmative ; mentioning at the same time, Ellen’s fears being similar to his own ; but expressed her hope they would both find them unfounded.

“ Would it not be of service to Sophia to take a ride this morning, my dear madam,” said the Marquis ; “ the air is considerably milder than it was yesterday, and even then, I did not think it so very piercing ; did you Lady Grace ? ”

“ By no means ; ” she returned ; “ but Harriet and Ellen complained greatly of the cold ; and perhaps Sophia may think this day too keen, after being confined to the house so much longer than she has been accustomed to.”

“I think indeed,” said Mrs. De Clairville smiling, “she had better not venture out at present.”

“In truth I am of your opinion,” rejoined Sir Charles. “I will accompany you with pleasure, Marquis, in a ride this morning, but let us wait a little longer before we request Sophia to be of our party.”

“Lady Grace intends being of it, I believe,” said Harriet rather archly; “at least I understood she promised the Marquis to ride with him, if the weather permitted.”

“I am happy to hear you say so,” cried Sir Charles smiling, “I shall have the greatest pleasure in entertaining her, whilst his Lordship pioneers for us.”

“I was going to express my hope,” returned the Marquis laughing, “that you would undertake that office, that I might

not lose sight of my fair friend so often as I was necessarily obliged to do yesterday."

"It is well my brother is not of a very hostile nature," said Mrs. De Clairville; "otherwise I should not feel easy at seeing you ride out to-day, both so eager to retain your station by the side of my young friend, and for the other to keep his distance from her."

"But where is Edward?" enquired Sir Charles. "Let us not, when he comes in, acquaint him with mine or Ellen's fears of Sophia's suffering further from her accident."

"We need not indeed, make him more serious," replied the Marquis. "But here he comes."

Mr. and Mrs De Clairville had another source of uneasiness besides that they ex-

perienced on Sophia's account. Edward their idolized son, had entirely lost his spirits, which had been attributed to his having the first evening of his return home, been the cause of his sister's accident. But it could no longer be ascribed to that, as he had the next morning expressed his happiness at finding her so little a sufferer from it. Unlike himself, he preferred being alone to mixing with his family ; and when he did come amongst them, his manner was so absent, that he was frequently addressed more than once before his attentions could be recalled. This day it was more than usually so ; he scarcely spoke to any one. On meeting his mother's eye turned upon him with marked solicitude, he endeavoured to rally his spirits, but soon relapsing into gloom, he again became silent, and as soon as possible left the room.

“ What can be the matter with Edward ? ” exclaimed the Marquis, as the

door closed upon him. " I begin strongly to suspect he has fallen in love."

" Is that the only reason you can assign for the silence of your sex ? " enquired Lady Grace smiling.

" The air of this house may be infectious," he returned ; " and I greatly fear that I shall not escape the contagion."

" You have indeed very much the appearance of becoming a victim to the blind god," returned her Ladyship laughing. No, no ; there is no symptom to be discerned about you, to lead us to suspect you are in so terrible a condition."

" I am so ignorant of them," cried the Marquis, " that it would be kind in you to teach me how to discover the first that may appear ; and then perhaps when I have made myself master so far of the subject,

you will confer a greater favor on me by prescribing for my recovery.

“No indeed,” she returned laughing; “I will have nothing to do with you. Harriet can instruct and prescribe for you better than I can.”

“But I suspect her time is so fully occupied with another patient, she can have none to bestow on me. Am I not right, my fair cousin ? ”

“ You are very impertinent,” said Harriet, blushing. “ I earnestly wish her Ladyship would undertake to tame you.”

“ Thank you most sincerely for that wish. Will you not Lady Grace oblige Miss De Clairville, by making the attempt? when shall I receive my first lesson ? ”

“ When I am more mistress of the subject. But do not despair, you will have

many opportunities of improving whilst you are here."

"Perhaps so ; but from whom should I edify so much as from yourself ? would you but deign to take compassion on me."

"Come my dear Lady Grace," said Harriet "we will leave this importunate youth to seek some other mode of entertaining himself, and join Emily and Ellen in the *sanctum*."

"I entreat you to have more compassion on me," he returned "and if you will take me with you to this hallowed retreat, I will endeavour to make myself useful, either in reading to, or painting with you, in short any way you wish to employ me in."

"Come then ;" cried Harriet laughing ; "whilst we paint, you shall read aloud one of our favorite Shakspeare's plays."

“ Oh delightful ! which of them shall it be ? Not *Love's labour lost*, I hope.”

“ No,” she returned, “ I do not intend to punish either you or ourselves so much.”

“ *Allons* then,” he cried, and placing an arm of each of his fair friends in his own, he accompanied them to their usual sitting-room.

Lord Ormondsty was one of Shakespeare's warmest admirers ; and his auditors were so much pleased on finding him so great an acquisition to their party, that without difficulty he obtained a general invitation to pass his mornings as Lord d'Arcy had done in the *sanctum*.

Sophia did not join them till near dinner : she looked pale, but this was attributed to her fall, and passed without notice. Edward appeared not in better

spirits than he had done in the morning ; he ate little and spoke less.

In the evening the Marquis proposed dancing reels. Sophia begged to be excused joining in one, but offered her services at the piano forte, which were thankfully accepted.

“ Come my friend,” cried the Marquis to Edward, “ make your bow to one of these ladies.”

“ I wish you would excuse me to night ;” he returned ; “ I am tormented with the head ache,”

“ The heart-ache, you mean, but I will not let you off : so follow me.”

Poor Edward unwillingly complied ; slowly he approached that part of the room where his mother and the young

ladies were seated at work. He stood contemplating them a moment, and then exclaimed, "How much more rational is this manner of spending an evening, than that which you, my Lord, have proposed."

Emily raised her eyes from her work, and fixing them upon her cousin, said, "you thought differently last winter Edward; as I recollect your observation then was, what a delightful recreation dancing was, after a day devoted to reading."

"Talk not of last winter Emily, I entreat," he exclaimed in a voice almost inarticulate from emotion; "it being to my mind a period of happiness which will never again return. But let it pass;" he sighed, and hiding his face on the arm that rested on his mother's chair sank into silence.

Emily looked mournfully at him, " what can have occasioned this melancholy alteration ? " she mentally ejaculated.

She was not allowed much time for thought ; as the Marquis had already led Lady Grace to her place, and calling Edward to follow, he immediately offered his hand to his cousin, who would not refuse it, though half tempted to do so ; but soon complaining of fatigue she requested Harriet to supply her place, and returned to her seat by her aunt.

" How is this, Miss Rushbrook," cried the Marquis, " I thought you were never tired with dancing."

" To night, I confess I do feel very much so;" she returned, faintly smiling.

" I suspect my love," said Mrs. de Clairville, " the dulness of your partner has

been the cause of your feeling so, this evening. I am very uneasy," she continued in a lower voice, "on Edward's account. Instead of being the life of us all he is become dull and abstracted. What has occasioned this alteration in him I am at a loss to imagine : but dread I scarcely know what. He may have been led into some entanglement from which he cannot extricate himself. Any certainty I could bear better than this cruel suspense. But I am wrong thus to distress you, my love, with any wild conjectures. Forgive me, my sweet Emily for having caused that sympathising tear."

Emily trying to disperse it, endeavoured to turn her aunt's thoughts from so distressing a theme to one more pleasing, and knowing that there had been a letter arrived that morning from Mrs. Howard, began making some enquiries after her, when

Sophia interrupted her by requesting that she would take her seat at the instrument. "The Marquis and Lady Grace," she cried will never tire. Poor Edward looks ready to drop, and Harriet and Ellen, notwithstanding they have relieved each other, begin to flag."

Emily was rising to obey her, when the dancers giving over, prevented the necessity of it,

"I fear my dear young friend," said Mrs. De Clairville as Lady Grace panting for breath sat down by her, "your brother would not feel satisfied with me, did he know that I had allowed you to fatigue yourself thus."

"Oh, you cannot think, my dear Mrs. De Clairville," she returned, "what a different being I feel here to what I do when dancing in a crowded room in Town. My

mother would not recognise her daughter were she to see her at this moment. Indeed I am not the least fatigued: and when Arthur returns, and the Deresfords and Howards arrive, we shall be able I hope, to make up a nice set for country dances.”

Sophia internally united in her hope, that, that time was not far distant ; and her brother requesting to hear a little music, she readily took her seat again at the piano forte, whilst Ellen sat down to the harp, and they continued playing till Sir Charles and her father joined the party.

The former challenged the Marquis to a game at billiards: but he professed himself too much fatigued by his late exertions, to accept it ; and persuading Mrs. De Clairville to make room for him between herself and Lady Grace on the sofa, he entered into a lively conversation with the latter.

Sir Charles smiling congratulated him upon his recovery from the fatigue he had complained of ; and then sat down to a game at piquet with Mr. De Clairville, which the rattling of this gay young nobleman somewhat interrupted. Mrs. De Clairville several times called him to order ; but with little effect as Lady Grace's smiles encouraged him to proceed.

Edward had taken a seat at a table where Emily and Sophia were engaged at work. For some time he spoke not ; but amused himself with snipping a piece of ribband which lay upon it, into a thousand shreds. Sophia, observing what he was about, taking the scissars from him, said " If you are in want of employment my good brother, hold this skein of silk for me, whilst I wind it, before you have done me more mischief or quite spoiled Emily's scissars."

" Are these scissars Emily's," he cried ;

then looking mournfully towards her, in a suppressed tone of voice he added, "In the same unthinking manner have I been cutting off every hope of happiness which I had so long cherished !"

Emily observed the expression of his countenance at this moment ; it spoke forcibly to her heart, and a sigh escaped her which she wished to have recalled. But Sophia alone overheard it, and plainly perceiving her brother was unhappy, and that her cousin was not less so, though unacquainted with the cause, she exerted herself to appear in her usual spirits, and anxious to turn the thoughts of both from unpleasant recollections, she sportively threw the skein of silk, she was winding, over Edward's hands, desiring him to make himself useful.

"What is this silk intended for ?" he with a faint smile enquired.

“A purse ; and if you promise to be very good, I will give it you when it is finished.”

“ I will certainly try,” he laughingly replied, “ to earn such a reward. But may I not ask what Miss Rnshbrook is employed in ? ”

“ In netting one also : hers is just completed, and is intended for me, so do not cast your eyes upon it with such greedy looks.”

“ I acknowledge,” he returned, “ I should like to become the possessor of it. See Emily how much I want one.”

Emily looking up, saw in his hand, the identical purse she had netted and presented to him on his birthday, two years before. It now appeared a little the worse for wear. She sighed as the remembrance of that happy time recurred to her mind, when

Edward was spending the summer vacation with them in Hampshire. She could scarcely believe it was the same person that was now sitting near her, and again she sighed at the alteration which had taken place in him, since that period.

“What will you give me, Edward,” said Sophia, “if I relinquish my claims on the purse, Emily is now at work upon.”

“I know of nothing,” he replied, “I can offer you equivalent to its value.”

“Poor young man ! Emily, I think we must take compassion on his poverty, and freely bestow the prize so highly valued.”

Emily blushing replied, she could have no objection to transferring the gift from the sister to the brother, if the former consented to relinquish it.

“ Will you indeed give me so precious a gift ? ” cried he, in a tone of animated delight. “ But no,” he added in one quite altered, “ you must not, for I do not deserve it ! ”

“ Your sex, my dear brother,” said Sophia laughing, “ have not generally so humble an opinion of their deserts; forgive me therefore, for doubting your sincerity in this instance. But see,” she cried, “ how you have entangled my silk, if you do not hold your hands steadier it will be entirely spoiled, and no one will benefit by my industry.”

‘ Let me hold it,’ said the Marquis, who had that moment followed Lady Grace to the table, “ I promise to assist you in disentangling the ruffled skein, for I know whose thanks I shall receive for my pains, if my conjectures are right in respect to the

person whose service it is to be employed in."

"You are wiser than I pretend to be," said Sophia, affecting not to understand to whom he alluded. "I had intended it for Edward, but he rejects it."

"Insensible young man;" cried the Marquis, "give the precious net-work, when finished, to me, unless," he added in a low voice, "you think d'Arcy would disapprove of your doing so."

Sophia much provoked, desired Lady Grace, to take him away for he only made matters worse; and then finding her patience unequal to the task of disentangling the ruffled silk, she hastily snatched it off her brother's hands, and throwing it into her netting box, said, "lie there thou tormenting thing till tomorrow evening;" then rising she complained of feeling very

sleepy, and bidding good night to all, hastened to her apartment, nor were the rest of the party long before they followed her example.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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